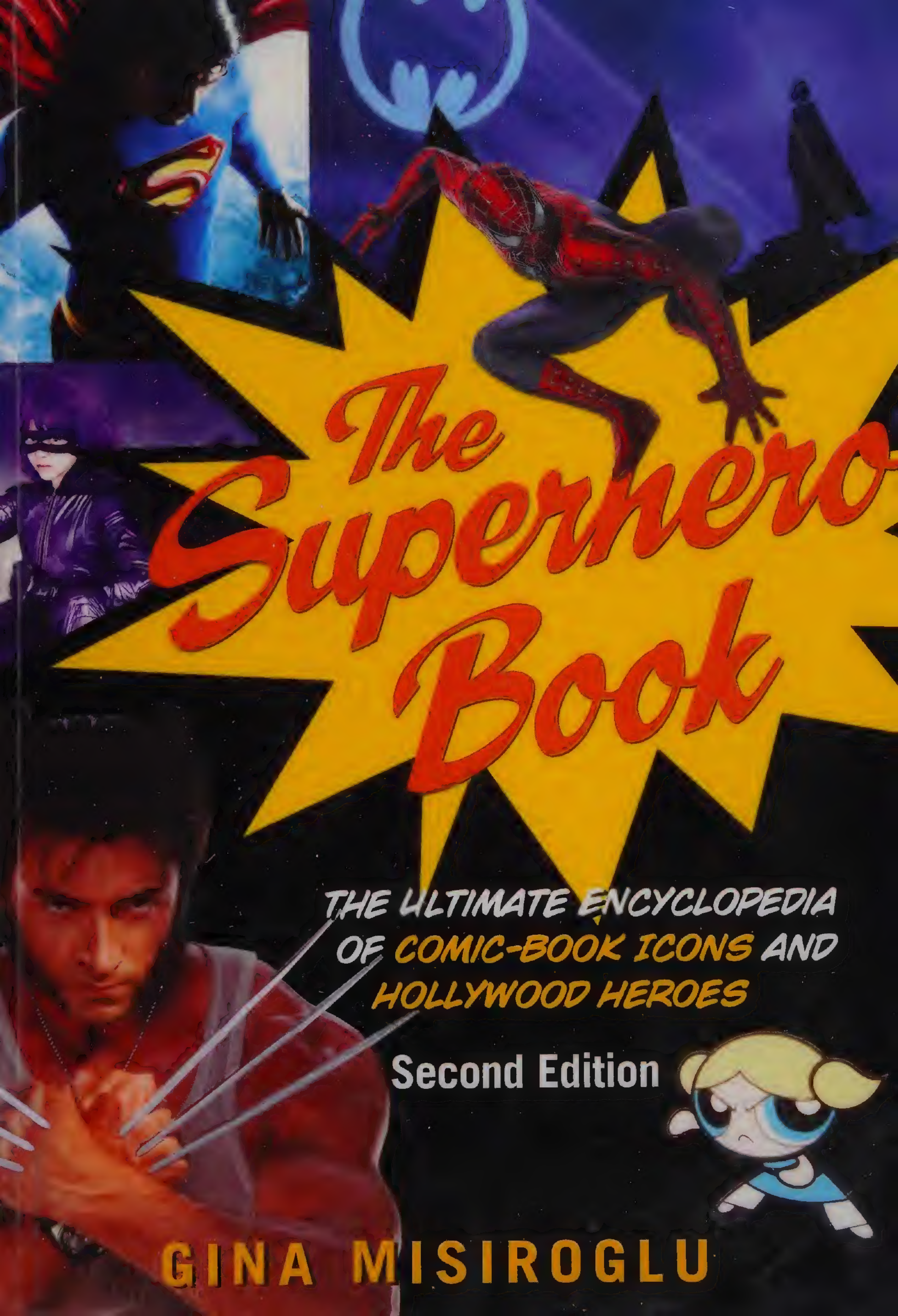


The Superhero Book

THE ULTIMATE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COMIC-BOOK ICONS AND HOLLYWOOD HEROES

Second Edition

GINA MISIROGLU

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2020 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/superherobookult0002unse

41.503
MIS

DOLTON PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT
3 1146 00355 0815

About the Author

Gina Misiroglu—also known by her code name, the Taskmistress—has authored or edited more than three dozen books in the popular culture, biography, American history, folklore, and women's studies genres. She is the editor of the three-volume reference work *American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History* (2009—winner of the 2010 RUSA Award for Outstanding Reference Source) and the *Encyclopedia of Women and American Popular Culture* (2012), which explores women's contributions to film, television, comics, music, fashion, and graphic art. Misiroglu was the co-editor of the first edition of *The Superhero Book* and its companion title *The Supervillain Book,* both of which received numerous accolades from the comics and film communities, including a Top Picks selection from SCOOP. She is a frequent speaker at the San Diego Comic Con, where she moderates panels for the Comics Arts Conference, a gathering of scholars who publish in the American studies and popular culture genres.

DOLTON PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT
708 849-2385

Also from Visible Ink Press

American Murder:
Criminals, Crime and the Media
by Mike Mayo
ISBN: 978-1-57859-191-6

Conspiracies and Secret Societies:
The Complete Dossier, 2nd edition
by Brad Steiger
and Sherry Hansen Steiger
ISBN: 978-1-57859-368-2

The Dream Encyclopedia, 2nd edition
by James R. Lewis
and Evelyn Dorothy Oliver
ISBN: 978-1-57859-216-6

The Handy Psychology Answer Book
by Lisa J. Cohen, Ph.D.
ISBN: 978-1-57859-223-4

Hidden Realms, Lost Civilizations,
and Beings from Other Worlds
by Jerome Clark
ISBN: 978-1-57859-175-6

Real Aliens, Space Beings,
and Creatures from Other Worlds
by Brad Steiger
and Sherry Hansen Steiger
ISBN: 978-1-57859-333-0

Real Ghosts, Restless Spirits,
and Haunted Places
by Brad Steiger
ISBN: 978-1-57859-146-6

Real Miracles, Divine Intervention, and
Feats of Incredible Survival
by Brad Steiger
and Sherry Hansen Steiger
ISBN: 978-1-57859-214-2

Real Nightmares: True and Truly Scary
Unexplained Phenomena
by Brad Steiger
eBook only

Real Vampires, Night Stalkers,
and Creatures from the Darkside
by Brad Steiger
ISBN: 978-1-57859-255-5

Real Zombies, the Living Dead,
and Creatures of the Apocalypse
by Brad Steiger
ISBN: 978-1-57859-296-8

The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia
of the Undead, 3rd edition
by J. Gordon Melton
ISBN: 978-1-57859-281-4

The Werewolf Book: The Encyclopedia
of Shape-Shifting Beings, 2nd edition
by Brad Steiger
ISBN: 978-1-57859-367-5

Please Visit Us at www.visibleinkpress.com.

The Superhero Book

THE ULTIMATE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COMIC-BOOK ICONS AND HOLLYWOOD HEROES

Second Edition

GINA MISIROGLU

VISIBLE
INK
PRESS
Detroit

The Superhero Book

The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Comic-Book Icons and Hollywood Heroes

SECOND EDITION

Copyright © 2012 by Visible Ink Press®

All illustrations are copyright by their respective copyright holders (according to the original copyright or publication date as printed in the comics) and are reproduced strictly for historical purposes. Any omission or incorrect information should be submitted to the publisher, so that it can be corrected in any future edition of this book.

All DC Comics characters, logos, and related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics, Inc.

All Marvel comic book characters and Marvel comic book material featured herein: ™ & © 2004, 2006, 2012 Marvel. Characters, Inc. SUPER HERO is a co-owned trademark. All such material is used with permission.

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper, or Website. All rights to this publication will be vigorously defended.

Visible Ink Press®
43311 Joy Rd. #414
Canton, MI 48187-2075

Visible Ink Press is a registered trademark of Visible Ink Press LLC.

Most Visible Ink Press books are available at special quantity discounts when purchased in bulk by corporations, organizations, or groups. Customized printings, special imprints, messages, and excerpts can be produced to meet your needs. For more information, contact Special Markets Director, Visible Ink Press, www.visibleinkpress.com, or 734-667-3211.

Managing Editor: Kevin S. Hile
Art Director: Mary Claire Krzewinski
Typesetting: Marco Di Vita
Proofreader: Chrystal Rozsa
Indexing: Larry Baker
Front cover images: The Kobal Collection.

Back cover images: Comic-book cover credits, from left to right: *Captain America* #106 © 1968 Marvel Comics; *Wonder Woman* #22 © 1988 DC Comics; *Hellboy* #1 ™ & © 1994 Michael Mignola, published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc.

ISBN 978-1-57859-375-0

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The superhero book : the ultimate encyclopedia of comic-book icons and Hollywood heroes / edited by Gina Misiroglu. — 2nd ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-57859-375-0
1. Comic books, strips, etc.—Encyclopedias. 2. Heroes in mass media—Encyclopedias. I. Misiroglu, Gina Renée.
PN6707.S87 2012
741.5'03—dc23 2011042669

Contents

Contributors ix
Introduction xiii

The Superhero Century

Golden Age (1938–1954) 1
Silver Age (1956–1969) 7
Bronze Age (1970–1980) 11
Late Bronze Age (1980–1984) 14
Modern Age (1985-Present) 15

A

Adam Strange 21
Alpha Flight 22
Alternative Superheroes . .24
America's Best Comics Heroes 26
Ant-Man and the Wasp . . .28
Aquaman 30
Archie Heroes 32
Astro City .33
The Atom .34
The Authority 36
The Avengers 37

B

The Badger 43
Bartman 44
Batgirl 46
Batman 48
Batwoman 54
Birds of Prey 55
Black Canary 56
The Black Cat 58
Black Knight 60
Black Panther 61
Black Terror 62
Black Widow 64
Blue Beetle 65
Buffy the Vampire Slayer 67
Bulletman .70

C

Camp and Comedy Heroes 73
Captain Action 80
Captain America 81
Captain Atom 86
Captain Marvel 88
Captain Marvel Jr. 90
Captain Marvel/Shazam! 91
Catwomanv 94
Challengers of the Unknown 96
Charlton Heroes 98
The Creeper 100

D

Daredevil I 103
Daredevil II 105
Dark Horse Heroes 109
Deadman 112
Deadpool 113
The Defenders 114
"Dial 'H' for Hero" 116
Doc Savage 117
Doctor Fate 119
Doctor Strange 120
Doom Patrol 122

E

Eclipse Heroes 125
Elektra 127
Elementals 129
Elongated Man 130
Eternals 131

F

Fantastic Four 133
Femforce 137
Fighting American 139
Firestorm 140
The Flash 142
Freedom Fighters 145
Funny Animal Heroes 147

Acknowledgments

The list of people who made this book possible is too long to reproduce here. Building on the backbone of the first edition, a thank-you of superheroic proportions is due to Peter Coogan, Michael Gross, Ivory Madison, Trina Robbins, and Robin S. Rosenberg. Contributing writers Michael Eury, Andy Mangels, Mike Martin, Adam McGovern, Frank Plowright, David A. Roach, and Peter Sanderson tirelessly penned entries into the wee hours of the night and provided critical advice at various points in the writing and editing process. Ed Katayama, proprietor of the comic-book shop A Hidden Fortress in Simi Valley, California, helped put the book's finishing touches on the image requirements, while comic-book companies such as AC Comics, Dark Horse, and Image were models of professionalism. An extra-special thanks goes to my team at Visible Ink Press, without whom this encyclopedic volume simply would not have been, including publisher Roger Jänecke managing editor Kevin Hile, art director Mary Claire Krzewinski, typesetter Marco Di Vita, proofreader Crystal Rozsa, and indexer Larry Baker.

Contributors

Editor

Gina Misiroglu (GM) specializes in the development and editing of popular culture, biography, American history, and women's studies titles. She is the editor of the three-volume reference work *American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History* (2009)—winner of the 2010 RUSA Award for Outstanding Reference Source—and the *Encyclopedia of Women and American Popular Culture* (2012), which explores women's contributions to film, television, comics, music, fashion, and graphic art. Misiroglu was the co-editor of the first edition of *The Superhero Book* and its companion title, *The Supervillain Book,* both of which received numerous accolades from the comics and film communities, including a Top Picks selection from SCOOP. She is a frequent speaker at the San Diego Comic Con, where she moderates panels for the Comics Arts Conference, a gathering of scholars who publish in the American studies and popular culture genres.

Contributing Writers

Guided into a life of superhero fandom by his heroic idol Adam "Batman" West, **Michael Eury (ME)** has co-created and/or written comics and cartoon properties for Nike, Toys R Us, Warner Bros. Worldwide Publishing, the Microsoft Network, the "First Flight" Centennial, DC Comics, Marvel Comics, Dark Horse Comics, Archie Comics, and *Cracked* magazine. A former editor for DC and Dark Horse, Eury edited the ambitious, award-winning, loose-leaf encyclopedia *Who's Who in the DC Universe,* and he is currently editing and co-writing the bimonthly comic-book magazine *Back Issue.* Eury has authored several published books, including *Captain Action: The Original Super-Hero Action Figure* (2002) and *Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day at a Time* (2003).

Andy Mangels (AM) is a best-selling author and co-author of more than a dozen books, including *Star Trek* and *Roswell* novels, and the books *Animation on DVD: The Ultimate Guide* (2003) and *Star Wars: The Essential Guide to Characters* (1995). He is an award-winning comic-book anthology editor and has written comics for almost two decades. He has also written thousands of articles for entertainment and lifestyle magazines and newspapers in the United States, England, and Italy, mostly about film and television.

Acknowledgments

The list of people who made this book possible is too long to reproduce here. Building on the backbone of the first edition, a thank-you of superheroic proportions is due to Peter Coogan, Michael Gross, Ivory Madison, Trina Robbins, and Robin S. Rosenberg. Contributing writers Michael Eury, Andy Mangels, Mike Martin, Adam McGovern, Frank Plowright, David A. Roach, and Peter Sanderson tirelessly penned entries into the wee hours of the night and provided critical advice at various points in the writing and editing process. Ed Katayama, proprietor of the comic-book shop A Hidden Fortress in Simi Valley, California, helped put the book's finishing touches on the image requirements, while comic-book companies such as AC Comics, Dark Horse, and Image were models of professionalism. An extra-special thanks goes to my team at Visible Ink Press, without whom this encyclopedic volume simply would not have been, including publisher Roger Jänecke managing editor Kevin Hile, art director Mary Claire Krzewinski, typesetter Marco Di Vita, proofreader Crystal Rozsa, and indexer Larry Baker.

Contributors

Editor

Gina Misiroglu (GM) specializes in the development and editing of popular culture, biography, American history, and women's studies titles. She is the editor of the three-volume reference work *American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History* (2009)—winner of the 2010 RUSA Award for Outstanding Reference Source—and the *Encyclopedia of Women and American Popular Culture* (2012), which explores women's contributions to film, television, comics, music, fashion, and graphic art. Misiroglu was the co-editor of the first edition of *The Superhero Book* and its companion title, *The Supervillain Book,* both of which received numerous accolades from the comics and film communities, including a Top Picks selection from SCOOP. She is a frequent speaker at the San Diego Comic Con, where she moderates panels for the Comics Arts Conference, a gathering of scholars who publish in the American studies and popular culture genres.

Contributing Writers

Guided into a life of superhero fandom by his heroic idol Adam "Batman" West, **Michael Eury (ME)** has co-created and/or written comics and cartoon properties for Nike, Toys R Us, Warner Bros. Worldwide Publishing, the Microsoft Network, the "First Flight" Centennial, DC Comics, Marvel Comics, Dark Horse Comics, Archie Comics, and *Cracked* magazine. A former editor for DC and Dark Horse, Eury edited the ambitious, award-winning, loose-leaf encyclopedia *Who's Who in the DC Universe,* and he is currently editing and co-writing the bimonthly comic-book magazine *Back Issue*. Eury has authored several published books, including *Captain Action: The Original Super-Hero Action Figure* (2002) and *Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day at a Time* (2003).

Andy Mangels (AM) is a best-selling author and co-author of more than a dozen books, including *Star Trek* and *Roswell* novels, and the books *Animation on DVD: The Ultimate Guide* (2003) and *Star Wars: The Essential Guide to Characters* (1995). He is an award-winning comic-book anthology editor and has written comics for almost two decades. He has also written thousands of articles for entertainment and lifestyle magazines and newspapers in the United States, England, and Italy, mostly about film and television.

Michael A. Martin (MAM)'s obsession with comics began more than three decades ago at a spinner-rack in Santa Claus Lane, California. Years after this origin tale, Martin schlepped the funnies to the direct-sales market, first for Marvel Comics and later for Dark Horse Comics. In 1996, he began collaborating with Andy Mangels on scripts for Marvel's *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* comics. That same year, Martin's solo original short fiction began appearing in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction.* He has co-authored (also with Mangels) several *Star Trek* novels and shorter pieces of *Star Trek* fiction for Pocket Books, as well as a trio of novels based on the late, lamented *Roswell* television series. He has written for *Star Trek Monthly,* Atlas Editions, *Dreamwatch,* Grolier Books, WildStorm, Platinum Studios, *Gobshite Quarterly,* and Gareth Stevens, Inc., for whom he has penned six *World Almanac Library of the States* nonfiction books.

Writing about action heroes wasn't **Adam McGovern (AMC)**'s choice; being named after one himself (Detective Adam Flint from the classic police drama *Naked City*) was his destiny. Since then he's fulfilled it by writing about comic books, cartoons, and other popular culture for such outlets as the *Village Voice, Yahoo! Internet Life* magazine, TotalTV Online, *Comic Book Artist,* and *The Jack Kirby Collector,* among many others. Corporate copywriting and nonprofit arts consulting help support his comic-book habit and prolong what was already a somewhat enduring adolescence.

Frank Plowright (FP) is best known to the comics community as co-organizer of the United Kingdom's longest-running comic convention, UKCAC. An established freelance writer, Plowright is editor of the revised edition of the *Slings and Arrows Comic Guide* (2003), which reviews more than 5,000 comic-book series from the 1930s to the present.

David Roach (DAR) is a comic-book illustrator and writer based in Wales, United Kingdom. In addition to his post as associate editor of the U.S.-based magazine *Comic Book Artist,* dedicated to the historic representation of comic-book characters, Roach has illustrated for several UK companies, including 2000 AD, Panini, and Marvel. In the United States, he has drawn and inked heroes for DC Comics, Dark Horse Comics, Topps, and the gaming company Wizards of the Coast. Roach is co-editor of *The Warren Companion: The Definitive Compendium to the Great Comics of Warren Publishing* (2001) and the revised edition of the *Slings and Arrows Comic Guide* (2003).

Peter Sanderson (PS) is a comics critic and historian who holds three degrees in English literature from Columbia University. He began teaching the course "Comics as Literature" at New York University in 2004, and he has been a graphic novel reviewer for *Publishers Weekly.* Sanderson has been interviewed about cartoon art on *CBS Sunday Morning* and regularly speaks about graphic novels at New York's Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art. Sanderson was the first official archivist at Marvel Comics, and he is the author of the books *Marvel Universe* (1996) and *The Ultimate Guide to the X-Men* (2000). Sanderson was also one of the principal writers for the original four versions of *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe* and DC Comics' *Who's Who.* Among other books to which he has contributed are *Marvel En-*

cyclopedia (2006), *The Supervillain Book* (2007), *Marvel Chronicle* (2008), and Sequart's collections of critical essays on the superhero series *Batman, Planetary,* and *Watchmen.* A frequent contributor to magazines about comics, Sanderson has written for *BACK ISSUE, Comic Buyer's Guide, The Comics Journal,* and *Wizard.*

and X-Men adventures, which consistently made worldwide top-grossing films lists. Mega-merchandising machines such as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and the Powerpuff Girls enjoyed previously unheard-of success, helping round out a burgeoning market filled with independents like the spunky neo-feminist Action Girl. Characters continued to show up on consumer products as varied as hair barrettes, lunchboxes, and cookie cutters, and they began to make new inroads into the video game, trading-card, and book markets. Such superheroes as Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, Wolverine, and the Avengers have appeared in the famous "Got Milk?" ad campaigns, and Miller Lite beer commercials have mimicked the oft-stated Spider-Man credo with the slogan, "With great beer comes great responsibility."

But who exactly are these mask-wearing, cape-donning men and women? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Secret identities? Who are their arch-enemies? When and where did the characters first appear and how have they changed through the years? *The Superhero Book*—the ultimate A–Z compendium of everyone's favorite superheroes and their mythology, sidekicks, villains, love interests, superpowers, vulnerabilities, and modus operandi—answers these questions and more as it explores many of pop culture's favorite icons. This second edition promises a leaner and meaner overview of character history and updates existing entries to include the latest happenings of America's mythic overachievers. Within these pages lie hundreds of entries on superheroes both mainstream and counterculture, famous and forgotten, best and worst, including classics like Green Lantern and Plastic Man, cult favorites like The Rocketeer and Madman, and timeless entities like the X-Men. It includes modern favorites such as Mr. Incredible and Elastigirl and would-be superstars such as Kick-Ass. You'll be reminded why you love them (who wouldn't want to fly like Superman for just one day?); why they were chosen to save the world ("We shall call you Captain America, son! Because like you—America shall gain the strength and will to safeguard our shores"); what they do for their day jobs (world traveler Oliver Queen ... Hollywood star and America's sweetheart Linda Turner ... billionaire playboy Bruce Wayne ... college student and freelance photographer Peter Parker), and their very human *faux pas* (as the Flash, he could outrun the wind, but as alter ego Barry Allen he was hard-pressed to show up for a date on time!).

Because this encyclopedia is as much a reference on modern mythology as it is a chronicling of the superhero genre in America, the book discusses the cultural phenomenon of each character and its various incarnations in the popular culture. Themed topics for discussion include alternative superheroes, camp and comedy heroes, multiculturalism, robot heroes, superheroines, supernatural heroes, and superpatriots. Each significant era of the superhero is explored—the Golden Age (1938–1954); the Silver Age (1956–1969); the Bronze Age (1970–1980); the Late Bronze Age (1980–1984); and the Modern Age (1985–present) –in a new chapter following this introduction, providing the reader with a perspective of the hero over the course of the twentieth century and beyond. And creators, comic-book companies, and merchandising efforts all take their rightful place in the history of hero-making.

Why do all this? The bottom line is tha we need our heroes. Psychologist Carl Jung (*Man and His Symbols*, 1964) and myth-maker Joseph Campbell (*The Hero with* *a Thousand Faces,* 1949) both explored society's need for heroes, though many prefer the edited version. Upon gazing at Batman and Robin approaching Gotham City in their Batcopter in *Batman: The Movie* (1966), Ordinary Joe said it best when he declared, "It gives a fella a good feeling to know they're up there doing their job." In a world not quite right, heroes provide a solution. Though scholars have long noted that superheroes fulfill our longing to honor the heroes of legend and myth, it really goes beyond that. They satisfy our "inner hero." Superheroes embody "the ancient longing of mankind for a mighty protector, a helper, guide or guardian angel who offers miraculous deliverance to mortals," observed Reinhold Reitberger and Wolfgang Fuchs in their *Comics: Anatomy of a Mass Medium* (1972). Frank Miller, artist extraordinaire of Daredevil, put it a bit differently when he said, "It's very comforting to know that there's a god-like figure going around making things right. That's a lot of what superheroes are about."

That's not all the outspoken Miller has had to say. Regarding the prospects for the superhero genre's health into the new millennium, Miller told the *Village Voice* in 2002, "The president talks incessantly about evil. I don't think melodrama is dead." Indeed, in the era of action-movie heroes winning governorships and military missions against opponents with designations like "Dr. Germ," comics have struck a chord again—even if nowadays they deal with gray skepticism about government motives as often as they deal in black-and-white portrayals of heroic firepower. Comics have emerged from an industry-wide sales slump since the first years of the new millennium, as current sales and hundreds of thousands of comic-con fans can attest to. Even though they were generating notice in prestigious quarters before then—with a Pulitzer Prize for Michael Chabon's novel about the comic-book medium's pioneers, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (2000), for example—the current cultural currency of blockbuster superhero films and widely covered events like Miller's *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* series (2001–2002) show that the costumed variety of comic book still has a lot to tell America about the state of its soul.

Noted cartoonist Jules Feiffer once said that if superheroes joined the more numerous supervillains, they would fill the skies like locusts. This truism prompts a note about selecting superheroes, particularly those created in the first half of the twentieth century: out of the tens of thousands of comic books that make up the Golden and Silver Ages, hundreds of them contain costumed heroes. Even following the strictest criteria of a superhero or superheroine—he or she wears a costume/mask and has special powers and/or a secret identity—a complete listing of every hero would be prohibitive. Therefore, the table of contents reflects the most diverse listing of American superheroes possible—those who are among the best loved, historically significant, or most representative of a type of hero.

As this revised edition makes clear, the superhero genre truly began with the debut of Superman in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938. But what exactly is a superhero? What made Superman such a revolutionary new creation that inspired an entire new genre of adventure fiction?

Contrary to popular belief, superpowers are not the essential element: Batman, for example, does not possess traditional superpowers such as flight or X-ray vision and X-Men adventures, which consistently made worldwide top-grossing films lists. Mega-merchandising machines such as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and the Powerpuff Girls enjoyed previously unheard-of success, helping round out a burgeoning market filled with independents like the spunky neo-feminist Action Girl. Characters continued to show up on consumer products as varied as hair barrettes, lunchboxes, and cookie cutters, and they began to make new inroads into the video game, trading-card, and book markets. Such superheroes as Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, Wolverine, and the Avengers have appeared in the famous "Got Milk?" ad campaigns, and Miller Lite beer commercials have mimicked the oft-stated Spider-Man credo with the slogan, "With great beer comes great responsibility."

But who exactly are these mask-wearing, cape-donning men and women? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Secret identities? Who are their arch-enemies? When and where did the characters first appear and how have they changed through the years? *The Superhero Book*—the ultimate A–Z compendium of everyone's favorite superheroes and their mythology, sidekicks, villains, love interests, superpowers, vulnerabilities, and modus operandi—answers these questions and more as it explores many of pop culture's favorite icons. This second edition promises a leaner and meaner overview of character history and updates existing entries to include the latest happenings of America's mythic overachievers. Within these pages lie hundreds of entries on superheroes both mainstream and counterculture, famous and forgotten, best and worst, including classics like Green Lantern and Plastic Man, cult favorites like The Rocketeer and Madman, and timeless entities like the X-Men. It includes modern favorites such as Mr. Incredible and Elastigirl and would-be superstars such as Kick-Ass. You'll be reminded why you love them (who wouldn't want to fly like Superman for just one day?); why they were chosen to save the world ("We shall call you Captain America, son! Because like you—America shall gain the strength and will to safeguard our shores"); what they do for their day jobs (world traveler Oliver Queen … Hollywood star and America's sweetheart Linda Turner … billionaire playboy Bruce Wayne … college student and freelance photographer Peter Parker), and their very human *faux pas* (as the Flash, he could outrun the wind, but as alter ego Barry Allen he was hard-pressed to show up for a date on time!).

Because this encyclopedia is as much a reference on modern mythology as it is a chronicling of the superhero genre in America, the book discusses the cultural phenomenon of each character and its various incarnations in the popular culture. Themed topics for discussion include alternative superheroes, camp and comedy heroes, multiculturalism, robot heroes, superheroines, supernatural heroes, and superpatriots. Each significant era of the superhero is explored—the Golden Age (1938–1954); the Silver Age (1956–1969); the Bronze Age (1970–1980); the Late Bronze Age (1980–1984); and the Modern Age (1985–present)—in a new chapter following this introduction, providing the reader with a perspective of the hero over the course of the twentieth century and beyond. And creators, comic-book companies, and merchandising efforts all take their rightful place in the history of hero-making.

Why do all this? The bottom line is tha we need our heroes. Psychologist Carl Jung (*Man and His Symbols*, 1964) and myth-maker Joseph Campbell (*The Hero with* *a Thousand Faces,* 1949) both explored society's need for heroes, though many prefer the edited version. Upon gazing at Batman and Robin approaching Gotham City in their Batcopter in *Batman: The Movie* (1966), Ordinary Joe said it best when he declared, "It gives a fella a good feeling to know they're up there doing their job." In a world not quite right, heroes provide a solution. Though scholars have long noted that superheroes fulfill our longing to honor the heroes of legend and myth, it really goes beyond that. They satisfy our "inner hero." Superheroes embody "the ancient longing of mankind for a mighty protector, a helper, guide or guardian angel who offers miraculous deliverance to mortals," observed Reinhold Reitberger and Wolfgang Fuchs in their *Comics: Anatomy of a Mass Medium* (1972). Frank Miller, artist extraordinaire of Daredevil, put it a bit differently when he said, "It's very comforting to know that there's a god-like figure going around making things right. That's a lot of what superheroes are about."

That's not all the outspoken Miller has had to say. Regarding the prospects for the superhero genre's health into the new millennium, Miller told the *Village Voice* in 2002, "The president talks incessantly about evil. I don't think melodrama is dead." Indeed, in the era of action-movie heroes winning governorships and military missions against opponents with designations like "Dr. Germ," comics have struck a chord again—even if nowadays they deal with gray skepticism about government motives as often as they deal in black-and-white portrayals of heroic firepower. Comics have emerged from an industry-wide sales slump since the first years of the new millennium, as current sales and hundreds of thousands of comic-con fans can attest to. Even though they were generating notice in prestigious quarters before then—with a Pulitzer Prize for Michael Chabon's novel about the comic-book medium's pioneers, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (2000), for example—the current cultural currency of blockbuster superhero films and widely covered events like Miller's *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* series (2001–2002) show that the costumed variety of comic book still has a lot to tell America about the state of its soul.

Noted cartoonist Jules Feiffer once said that if superheroes joined the more numerous supervillains, they would fill the skies like locusts. This truism prompts a note about selecting superheroes, particularly those created in the first half of the twentieth century: out of the tens of thousands of comic books that make up the Golden and Silver Ages, hundreds of them contain costumed heroes. Even following the strictest criteria of a superhero or superheroine—he or she wears a costume/mask and has special powers and/or a secret identity—a complete listing of every hero would be prohibitive. Therefore, the table of contents reflects the most diverse listing of American superheroes possible—those who are among the best loved, historically significant, or most representative of a type of hero.

As this revised edition makes clear, the superhero genre truly began with the debut of Superman in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938. But what exactly is a superhero? What made Superman such a revolutionary new creation that inspired an entire new genre of adventure fiction?

Contrary to popular belief, superpowers are not the essential element: Batman, for example, does not possess traditional superpowers such as flight or X-ray vision but rather relies on his highly developed intellectual skills to empower him; Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* and the Doctor in *Doctor Who* have superhuman abilities, but they are science-fiction heroes, not superheroes. Some people use the word "superhero" to describe any kind of hero that seems larger than life, no matter what genre the character is in. To do so is to render the term "superhero" virtually meaningless. James Bond is not a superhero; nor is Robin Hood, the Lone Ranger, Sherlock Holmes, Lara Croft, or Indiana Jones—no matter how extraordinary their abilities may be.

In his book *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre* (2006), Peter Coogan, Ph.D., performed the invaluable service of defining just what a superhero is: "A heroic character with a selfless, pro-social mission; with superpowers—extraordinary abilities, advanced technology, or highly developed physical, mental, or mystical skills; who has a superhero identity embodied in a codename and iconic costume, which typically express his biography, character, powers, or origin (transformation from ordinary person to superhero); and who is generally distinct, i.e. can be distinguished from characters of related genres (fantasy, science fiction, detective, etc.) by a preponderance of generic conventions. Often superheroes have dual identities, the ordinary one of which is usually a closely guarded secret."

There can be variations on these criteria: the Hulk, for example, has a distinctive and iconic visual appearance rather than a superheroic costume. But Dr. Coogan's three criteria—mission, powers, and identity—are the main factors in identifying superheroes and the ones I used in the heroes' profiles within this book. Moreover, as he states, a superhero operates in the superhero genre, which includes such genre conventions as supervillains. The Lone Ranger may have a mask and a mission and be an extraordinary gunfighter, but he operates in the Western genre.

Following these criteria, *The Superhero Book* naturally eliminates entries for one-off or obscure characters, as well as those that would more precisely be defined as cowboys, magicians, detectives, spacemen, or jungle adventurers. However, this book does cover some major transitional figures, like Doc Savage and the Shadow, who preceded Superman and Batman and were highly influential on them and the superhero genre.

The ground gets muddier for the later heroes, those of the Bronze and Modern Ages, since they break away from the "strict criteria" that can easily be applied to the earlier heroes. Here, some artistic license has been applied to their selection. Many of these later protagonists possess qualities customarily considered non-heroic, or "anti-heroic," their motivations for superheroic acts being not always selfless or clear. To further broaden the definition, they may not always wear a costume or have a dual identity, yet the popular culture considers them heroes primarily because there is a strong heroic identity associated with the character. Rather than argue whether certain borderline characters—such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer or the title characters in the TV show *Heroes*—fit the mold, the book chooses to include them and lets the reader draw his or her own conclusions.

These qualifiers aside, the goal of *The Superhero Book* is straightforward: to pay homage to the heroes who have, in whatever minor or major way, influenced our lives.

—Gina Misiroglu

The Superhero Century

An advent of the twentieth century and a clear marker of American popular culture, costumed superheroes have achieved historic milestones within the last seventy-five years of American history. Much like in radio, film, and television, several key "ages" have defined comic-book history in general and the superhero genre specifically. Characterized as periods of artistic advancement and commercial success, the superhero ages are generally classified as the Golden Age (1938–1954), the Silver Age (1956–1969), the Bronze Age (1970–1980), the Late Bronze Age (1980–1984), and the Modern Age (1985–present).

Golden Age (1938-1954)

In the view of many readers, the superhero and the comic book are interchangeable, but historically the comic book came first.

THE FIRST COMIC BOOKS

Collections of newspaper comic strips and cartoons had been published as early as the late nineteenth century, printed on low-grade pulp paper in a variety of sizes and generally distributed as promotional items. The characters featured in these publications—*The Yellow Kid* and *The Katzenjammer Kids* were among the more popular early features—were almost entirely comical, earning the nicknames "the funnies" or "funny papers." Dell Publishing introduced *The Funnies,* which resembled a Sunday newspaper comics section, in 1929. An anthology of Sunday newspaper strips, *Famous Funnies* #1, debuted as a monthly periodical in May 1934, and this is acknowledged as the precursor to the conventional comic book (although this series was preceded a year earlier by two similarly formatted one-shots, *Funnies on Parade* and *Famous Funnies: A Carnival of Comics*).

Pulp magazines catered to readers craving adventure and thrills. The "pulps," collections of prose short stories published on pulp paper with an illustrated (usually painted) cover image, emerged in the early twentieth century and grew to tremendous popularity, particularly in the 1920s through the 1940s. From anthologies like *Weird Tales* to solo titles featuring mysterious heroes like *The Shadow* (whose pulp series lasted an astounding 326 issues from 1931 to 1949), the pulps offered breathtaking action and chilling suspense.

It was only a matter of time before these two modes of popular culture converged. Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, a retired soldier and author of pulp stories in the late 1920s and early 1930s, started his own publishing house in

1935—National Allied Publications—and in February of that year released *New Fun* #1, the first comic-book series exclusively consisting of new material; in this case, comic strips. Adventure-oriented comics with new material followed, most notably *Detective Comics* #1, released in March 1937 by Wheeler-Nicholson and his new partners, Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz, who both then took over the company, renaming it National Comics—even though it was (and still is) commonly called DC.

THE COMING OF THE SUPERHERO

In the first four decades of the twentieth century, there were notable and popular fictional characters that foreshadowed and inspired the superheroes to come: Zorro in prose and on film, Doc Savage in pulp magazines, the Shadow in the pulps and on radio, the Green Hornet on radio, and the Phantom in a newspaper comic strip. The first masked crime fighter in comic books was the Clock, whom Centaur Publications introduced in 1936. But it was two young men from Cleveland who created the character who truly launched the superhero genre.

DC Comics introduced the first costumed superhero, Superman, in *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938). Superman's creators, writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster, had unsuccessfully tried to sell the series to newspaper syndicates as a daily strip. DC took an enormous risk in 1938 by publishing the untried character, given the depressed economic climate of the day. Siegel and Shuster's unwavering faith in their superpowered champion never faltered, and readers of the day reciprocated the creators' enthusiasm: *Action* #1 sold phenomenally well; with subsequent issues its circulation figures were boosted to meet reader demand. Superman, the first superhero, was a hit.

At the time, however, Superman was not labeled or marketed as a "superhero," even though he perfectly personified the term as it is defined by many comic-book scholars today: a heroic character with an altruistic mission, who possesses superpowers, wears a defining costume, and functions in the "real world" in his or her alter ego. According to author Mike Benton, in his book *Superhero Comics of the Golden Age: The Illustrated History* (1992): "Although the term 'superhero' was used as early as 1917 to describe a public figure of great talents or accomplishments, the early comic book heroes of the 1940s were usually referred to by their creators as 'costumed characters' or as 'long-underwear' or 'union-suit heroes.'" They were also called "mystery men." Nonetheless, the superhero had been established and was about to multiply in number through American popular culture.

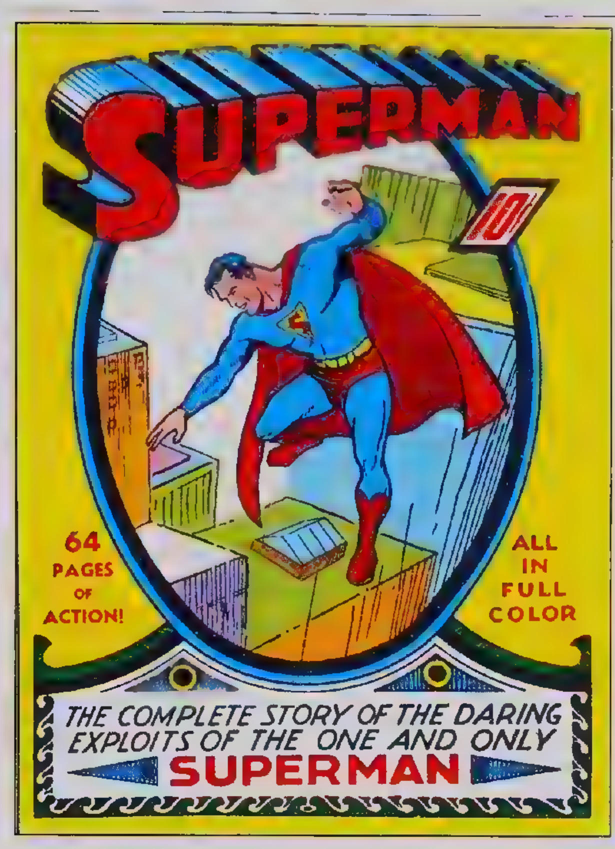
IN SUPERMAN'S FOOTSTEPS

Encouraged by Superman's success, DC introduced the Crimson Avenger in *Detective* #20 (October 1938), the Sandman in *New York World's Fair Comics* #1 (April 1939), and Batman in *Detective* #27 (May 1939). It published *Superman* #1, spinning off the "Man of Steel" into his own solo series, in the summer of 1939.

Victor Fox was an accountant for DC Comics who knew a good thing when he saw it. After witnessing the profits generated by Superman in *Action,* Fox quit his day job and started his own publishing company, Fox Features Syndicate. The overly ambitious Fox was sued by his former employer upon the May 1939 release of *Wonder Comics* #1, which featured "the daring, superhuman exploits" of Wonder Man, a superpowered character who was created by Will Eisner and was too close to Superman for DC's comfort. Wonder Man did not return for a second appearance, but Fox continued to publish comics, introducing the Flame, the Green Mask, and the Blue Beetle.

Entrepreneurs other than Fox also took notice of the success of Superman, and comic-book publishers—from talented visionaries to fly-by-night shysters—sprouted up instantly, with a flood of new "long-underwear heroes" spilling forth, including Lev Gleason Publications' Silver Streak; Quality Comics Group's Doll Man; Brookwood Publications' Shock Gibson; Centaur Publications' Amazing-Man, the Arrow, the Iron Skull, and the Fantom of the Fair; and MLJ Publications' the Wizard.

A publisher that would later become DC's chief competitor entered the field in November


SUPERMAN
10¢
64 PAGES OF ACTION!
ALL IN FULL COLOR
THE COMPLETE STORY OF THE DARING EXPLOITS OF THE ONE AND ONLY SUPERMAN

Superman #1 © 1939 DC Comics. (Cover art by Joe Shuster.)

1939: Timely Comics. Its first superheroes—the first Human Torch, the Sub-Mariner, and the original Angel—premiered that month in an anthology that bore the eventual name of the company: *Marvel Comics* #1.

Comic books were the perfect entertainment form for Great Depression audiences: their heroic, larger-than-life characters stirred the demoralized masses, and the very format of the magazines themselves—usually sixty-four pages of original material for a mere dime—was a bargain during those times of economic hardship.

THE SUPERHERO EXPLOSION

The years 1940 and 1941 heralded an eruption of new comic-book superheroes. Included among their legion: DC's the Flash, Hawkman, the Spectre, Hourman, Dr. Fate, Green Lantern, the Atom, Starman, Green Arrow, and Aquaman; Fawcett Publications' Spy Smasher, Bulletman, Ibis the Invincible, and the "World's Mightiest Mortal," Captain Marvel; plus Cat-Man, Blue Bolt, the Black Terror, Hydroman, the Ray, Plastic Man, Midnight, the Human Bomb, Magno (the Magnetic Man), Daredevil, the Black Hood, the Comet, and Will Eisner's the Spirit (who starred in a comic supplement appearing in newspapers).

Superhero sub-categories quickly arose. There were the sidekicks, pre-teen or teenage junior superheroes who worked alongside their adult mentors. Starting this trend was Robin the Boy Wonder, "the sensational character find of 1940," first seen in *Detective* #38. Robin was introduced by Batman creator Bob Kane as a gateway for young readers to live vicariously "inside" the hero's adventures, and as a means to soften the rather gruesome tone of Batman's first year of publication in which the character, originally more anti-hero than superhero, hurled mobsters off rooftops. The concept of the superhero sidekick was yet another first for DC Comics, and another success. More kid heroes followed, like Toro and Captain Marvel Jr. Superheroines began to appear in the man's world of superheroics: Wonder Woman, the Woman in Red, Phantom Lady, Lady Luck, and Black Cat were among the first. These two sub-categories dovetailed with the introduction of female sidekicks to superheroes, such as Flame Girl, Bulletgirl, Hawkgirl, Mary Marvel, and Cat-Man's partner, Kitten. And in the winter of 1940, the superteam was born, as the Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, and other DC superheroes joined forces as the Justice Society of America.

These early superheroes (except for Timely's anti-hero, the Sub-Mariner, and its flaming android, the Torch) had secret identities; they obtained superpowers through bizarre, often scientifically based occurrences, or through acquisition of power-inducing devices; they hid their actual identities behind a mask, a costume, and, often, a cape; they adopted a flamboyant appellation; they engaged in bizarre or outlandish escapades; and they dedicated their lives and their abilities to fighting crime. Or to fighting Nazis.

SUPERHEROES HELP FIGHT WORLD WAR II

"As World War II spread across Europe in the late 1930s, comic books began to take notice," commented author Ron Goulart in *Comic Book Culture* (2000). Superman, a symbol of American patriotism in his blue-and-red uniform, fought tyrants and dictators, apprehending both Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin in a special comic prepared in 1940 for *Look* magazine—not surprising since the Man of Steel was called "the champion of the oppressed" in his *Action* #1 debut. Captain Marvel and other superheroes also clobbered Nazi and Japanese soldiers on the covers of their comics, even before the December 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the conflict.

It was MLJ Publications—the company that would later be known as Archie Comics—that introduced the first specifically patriotic superhero: the Shield, in *Pep Comics* #1 (January 1940), a red-white-and-blue-garbed crime fighter who used his superpowers, obtained from a secret formula, to protect American soil from enemy saboteurs and spies. The best-known patriotic superhero premiered in March 1941: Timely (Marvel)'s Captain America. "Cap," originally a weakling intensely loyal to his country, took a government-invented "super soldier serum" to permanently transform into the superhero who remains in print—and stars in movies—in the first decades of the twenty-first century. The Shield and Captain America were merely two of a contingent of starred-and-striped heroes who appeared prior to and after America's entering the war: Miss Victory, U.S. Jones, the Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy (a kid hero with an adult sidekick), Pat Patriot, Captain Victory, the Fighting Yank, Captain Flag, the American Eagle, the Spirit of 76, American Crusader, Captain Fearless, Flag-Man, Yankee Girl, Liberty Belle, and Minute-Man (the One Man Army) were just some of the dozens of superpatriots of the World War II era. Even Uncle Sam, the symbol of U.S. Army recruitment, was a superhero during the 1940s.

A superhero was not required to wear stars and stripes to fight the Axis. The grimly clad Hangman punched out Nazis, Batman and Robin sold war bonds, and even the undersea terrorist Sub-Mariner—dressed in nothing but green swim trunks—redirected his aggression from attacking New York landmarks toward sinking Japanese subs. Fawcett Publications' Spy Smasher's garb was rather mundane when compared to his fellow flashy freedom fighters: he sported an aviator's helmet, khakis, a bomber jacket, and a crimson cape. But with his noiseless Gyrosub—plane, submarine, helicopter, and speedboat rolled into one—Spy Smasher crippled saboteurs' vessels and ferreted out enemy agents, flying into his own twelve-chapter movie serial in 1942.

Real-life German and Japanese soldiers inspired fictional foes in Golden Age comic books, including Captain Nazi, the Red Skull, Baron Gestapo, Captain Nippon, and Captain Swastika. The Claw, a jaundiced "Oriental" with fearsome fangs, appeared in Gleason Publications' *Daredevil* series, as did Hitler himself in the legendary *Daredevil Battles Hitler* #1 (a.k.a. *Daredevil* #1) in 1941.

Beyond the cover pinups, the Axis were pummeled and ridiculed in the comics stories themselves. Thick, stereotyped accents were afforded to both German and Japanese characters in most Golden Age comics. In "The Human Torch and Sub-Mariner Fighting Side by Side" in *Marvel Mystery Comics* #17 (1941), as the unconscious Sub-Mariner is being strung up a Nazi soldier brags: "He is our symbol of victory! Unvard!" Comics became pro-war propaganda and were highly popular with American servicemen.

COMICS SELL MILLIONS

The comic-book industry flourished from a mere six companies in the pre-Superman days of 1936 to two dozen by the early 1940s, some of them manufacturing comics pages in unsavory, assembly-line conditions that resembled sweatshops. Original art pages shuffled down lines of artists, each with his or her own task: one would letter the word balloons, one would ink faces, one would ink figures, and one would ink backgrounds. Artists and writers of the era sometimes huddled collectively into New York City apartments for an entire weekend of all-nighters, grinding out pages at a frantic pace. A 1943 *Newsweek* article cited twenty-five million copies of comic books being sold each month. "They were selling 102 percent; that is, beyond their spoilage rate," former comic-book writer William

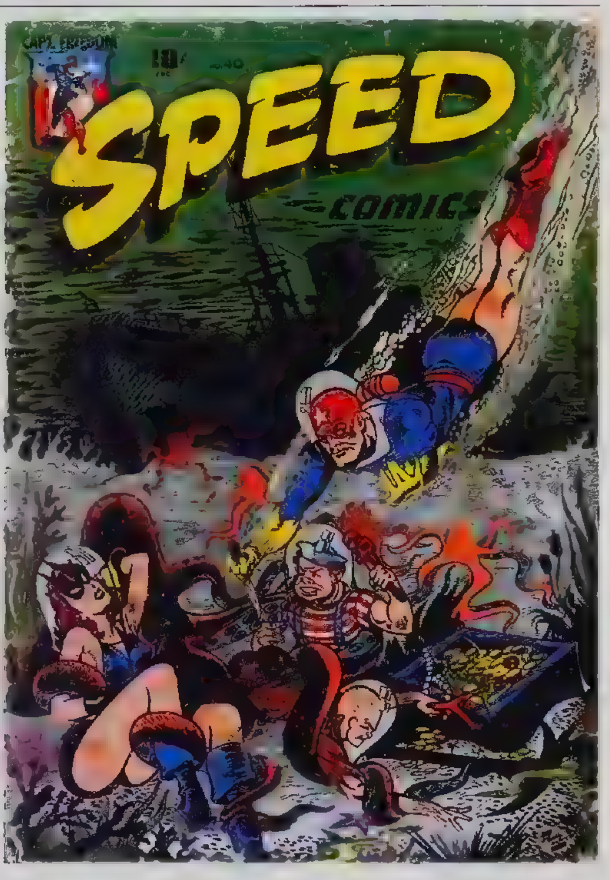
Woolfolk once revealed. By the mid-1940s, eager would-be publishers were blockaded from entering this expanding field by the paper shortages of World War II. Kids were encouraged to donate their used comics to paper drives, resulting in their rarity in the 2000s, where high-grade copies of 1940s comics command prices, in some cases, of tens of thousands of dollars. Despite paper rationing, the existing publishers continued to produce, produce, produce.

Voraciously reading these comics were millions of American boys. The medium spoke to them, its superheroes offering inspiration during a trying time. Captain America, striking an "Uncle Sam Wants You" recruitment pose, was featured in house ads encouraging young readers to join his "Sentinels of Liberty" club, "... and wear a badge that proves you are a loyal believer in Americanism." Not to be outdone, Superman enticed readers to become one of the "Supermen of America." Boys would regularly congregate for "swaps," haggling trades of their well-read comics among one another. Popular titles like *Captain Marvel Adventures, Superman,* and *Captain America* would command more trading value among these young negotiators.

Although no one at the time referred to it as such, this era of comics, particularly superhero comics, is considered the medium's Golden Age. In retrospect, the era is better remembered for its novelty and profusion, not for the quality of its material. Most superhero stories of the Golden Age were primitively scripted and crudely drawn, yet at the time the audience was less discerning, seeking escapism rather than artistic or intellectual engagement.

GOLDEN AGE GREATS

Some Golden Age superhero comics, however, brilliantly exemplify superlative storytelling and artistic excellence. One such series is Quality Comics' *Kid Eternity,* first seen in *Hit Comics* #25 (December 1942). The "kid"—he is never given an actual name—dies, along with his grandfather, when the merchant marine ship they are on is torpedoed by Nazis. The boy's death is deemed a heavenly mistake, and he is returned to Earth, accompanied by a ghostly guardian, Mr. Keeper. As Kid Eternity, he commands a magic word ("Eternity!") to summon famous historical figures into the present to fight crime for him.



Speed Comics #40 © 1945 Harvey Comics. (Cover art by Rudy Palais.)

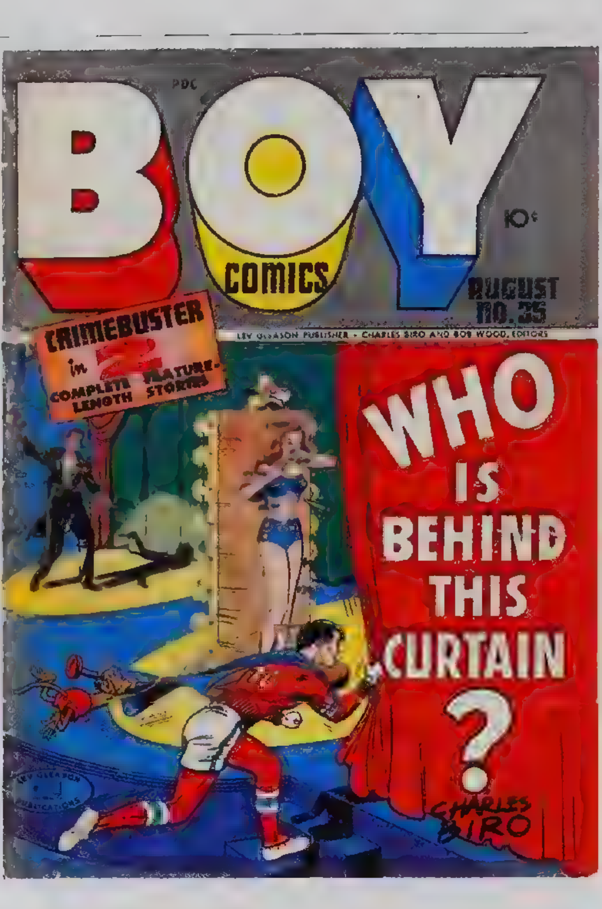
Other standouts highly regarded by collectors and historians include: the charming Captain Marvel tales whimsically drawn by C.C. Beck, Kurt Schaffenberger, and other illustrators; Captain Marvel Jr., a character who, under the guidance of artist Mac Raboy, was rendered in a manner much more realistic than Captain Marvel's; Matt Baker's voluptuously rendered "Good Girl" art pinups on *Phantom Lady* and other covers; Jerry Robinson's creepy interpretation of his creation the villainous Joker in *Batman* #1 (1940); Bill Everett's breathtaking underseascapes in *Sub-Mariner*; Jack Cole's ingeniously lively layouts on Plastic Man; Alex Schomburg's bombastically bold covers on *Captain America* and other patriotic series; Will Eisner's groundbreaking splash-page designs in *The Spirit*; and virtually anything drawn by virtuosos Jack Kirby, Reed Crandall, and Lou Fine.

POSTWAR WOES

The end of World War II nearly marked the end of the superhero. With the Axis forces eliminated as the menace *du jour,* "comic-book heroes and heroines had nothing to do," noted Fawcett Comics artist Beck. One by one, superhero titles were canceled. Publishers went out of business, and those that survived did so from the success of new genres like funny animals, Westerns, horror, crime, romance, and science fiction, although those titles sold, at best, roughly half of circulation figures from the World War II boom.

Postwar America, despite its illusion of prosperity, was gripped by the fear of nuclear war and the spread of communism. Comics publishers scrambled to take advantage of the audience's awareness of both. The cover of *Captain Marvel Adventures* #66 (1946) depicts the hero standing amid a decimated city, with warheads sailing his way, its blurb proclaiming, "Captain Marvel Battles the Dread Atomic War!" Similarly, Superman, Fighting Yank, and other superheroes lamented nuclear warfare, while neo-heroes Atomic Man, Atoma, Atoman, and the Atomic Thunderbolt capitalized on it. Radiation-spawned monsters became a recurring theme in superhero comics by the 1950s; Plastic Man fought giant ants, and Batman and Robin were plagued by giant bees. Marvel Comics, which had canceled its superhero comics in the late 1940s, resurrected Captain America, Sub-Mariner, and the Human Torch as "Commie busters" in the early 1950s, and artist Jack Kirby and his partner Joe Simon launched a short-lived superhero parody, *Fighting American,* taking on the Red scare with tongue placed firmly in cheek. But readers did not seem to care. Comic-book consumers had a new pastime: the Golden Age of superheroes had given way to the Golden Age of television.

By the mid-1950s, only DC's Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman continued to star in their own titles, and they were about to meet a real-life supervillain who would endanger them further: Dr. Frederic Wertham. A psychologist, Wertham published a 1954 book titled *Seduction of the Innocent,* indicting comic books for causing juvenile delinquency and moral decay among youth. In response, the Senate Judiciary Committee created a Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency in the United States, which held widely publicized hearings between April and June 1954 to investigate the validity of Wertham's claims. Rather than fall under the wrath of the federal government, in September of that year the comic-book industry created the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA), an organization made up of all comic-book publishers that wanted to get their comic books distributed. The CMAA immediately went to work adopting the self-censoring Comics Code Authority (CCA), whose forty-one standards described strict editorial guidelines for depicting sex, crime, horror, and violence within the pages of comics.


BOY
COMICS
10¢
AUGUST
NO. 35
LEV GLEASON PUBLISHER • CHARLES BIRO AND BOB WOOD, EDITORS
CRIMEBUSTER in 2 COMPLETE FEATURE-LENGTH STORIES
WHO IS BEHIND THIS CURTAIN ?
CHARLES BIRO

Boy Comics #35 © 1947 Lev Gleason. (Cover art by Charles Biro.)

Despite the industry's good intentions in pursing a path of self-censorship, the majority of comics publishers went out of business or canceled entire lines of books during the 1950s, with those remaining—most notably, DC—"dumbing down" their stories in an effort to meet the requirements of the code and appeal to a nation in the thrall of repressive moral standards. Sales shrunk even more, as many parents forbade their children from reading comics. It was comics' darkest hour. The Golden Age of superheroes was over.

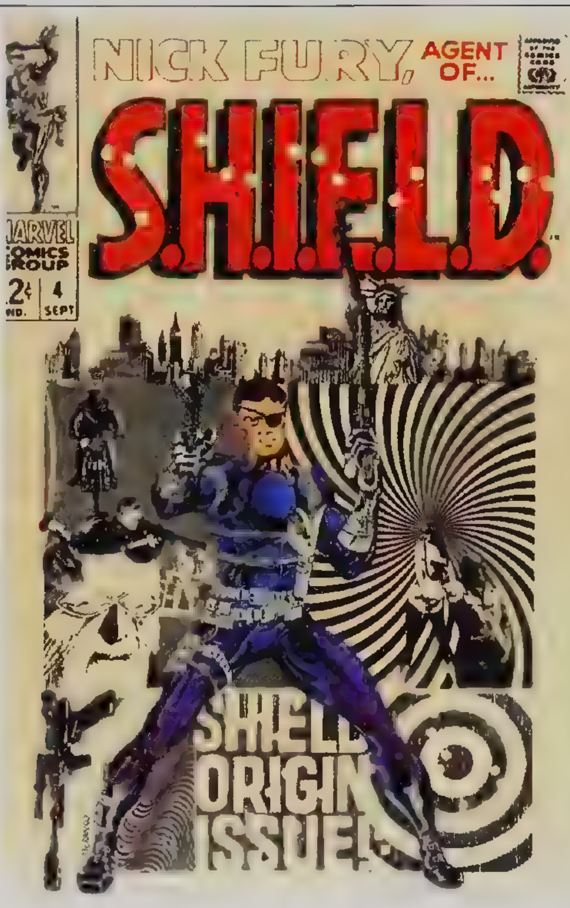
Silver Age (1956–1969)

It was 1955, and the comic-book industry was imperiled. Superheroes were passé, save the Man of Steel, a media star thanks to *The Adventures of Superman* (1953–1957), a syndicated program appearing on the medium that had robbed comics of much of its audience: television.

To survive, comics had turned to other genres, including science fiction. Science and technology proved a popular theme. Technological advancements spawned during the atomic age piqued Americans' imaginations, while the Red Scare (fear of communist states like the Soviet Union) fomented rampant paranoia. Science and Cold War mistrust melded in November 1955 when DC Comics introduced—with absolutely no fanfare—the first new superhero in roughly ten years: the Manhunter from Mars. First seen as the backup feature to Batman and Robin in *Detective Comics* #115, J'onn J'onzz (pronounced "John Jones"), a green-skinned superman, is teleported to Earth by an American scientist. Unable to return home, J'onzz employs his shape-shifting ability to masquerade as a human detective named … John Jones. The Manhunter from Mars would eventually be better known as the Martian Manhunter.

THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE

In 1956 DC Comics, struggling to find new concepts that might attract readers, introduced a "tryout" title, *Showcase*. "The first three *Showcases* flopped," editor Julius "Julie" Schwartz recalled in his autobiography, *Man of Two Worlds: My Life in Science Fiction and Comics* (2000), "and we were at an editorial meeting trying to decide what to do in number four when I suggested that we try to revive the Flash." This renewal was given the green light despite the trepidation of other editors still battle-weary from the demise of superheroes several years earlier.



Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. #4 © 1968 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jim Steranko.)

Schwartz steered the project into a fresh direction. Jay Garrick, the Flash of comics' Golden Age (1938–1954), was ignored—for a time, at least—and a new character, police scientist Barry Allen, obtained superspeed in his initial excursion in *Showcase* #4 (September–October 1956). Given a sporty costume by artist Carmine Infantino, the Flash mixed action, style, and imagination, an attractive alternative to DC's other series and to then current television fare, where special-effects limitations made such superactivity impossible (or laughable when attempted). Brisk sales warranted three more *Showcase* appearances before the "Fastest Man Alive" sped into his own magazine.

At the time, DC, Schwartz, Infantino, and original Flash writer Robert Kanigher merely had in mind the creation of a new product that would generate readers and profit. Their efforts, and the Flash's runaway success, marked a vital moment in comic-book history: the beginning of its eminent Silver Age (1956–1969). Without the success of the Flash, publishers might have given up on superheroes, leading the genre into extinction.

POST-FLASH DC SUPERHEROES

In 1958, Schwartz's colleague Mort Weisinger, editor of DC's Superman franchise, guest-starred the Legion of Super-Heroes—one of the first times the term "superheroes" was used on a comics cover—in the Superboy strip in *Adventure Comics* #247. Cosmic Boy, Saturn Girl, and Lightning Boy (later renamed Lightning Lad) were superpowered teenagers from a thousand years in the future who traveled to the past to recruit the Boy of Steel into their club of heroes. Weisinger added a new superpowered member to Superman's family in May 1959, when *Action Comics* #252 introduced the Man of Steel's cousin Supergirl, a survivor of the planet Krypton.

Schwartz's next volley was the reintroduction of Green Lantern, another DC Golden Age great. As he did with the Flash, Schwartz took the superhero's name and power—in this case, his power *ring*, the source of Green Lantern's almost limitless abilities—and premiered a new version of the character in *Showcase* #22 (September–October 1959). Robust reader response to the hero led to the release of *Green Lantern* #1 in 1960.

With the acclaim for the Flash and Green Lantern, Schwartz took an ambitious step in *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (1960) by combining them, along with DC's other major superheroes—Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, and the Martian Manhunter—into a team called the Justice League of America, another revamp, this time of the Golden Age's Justice *Society* of America. Continuing Schwartz's winning streak, the "JLA" was a smash, and the editor next overhauled both Hawkman and the Atom in 1961. Also that year, he published the momentous "Flash of Two Worlds" in *The Flash* #123, introducing the concept of a parallel world—"Earth-Two," where the Golden Age Flash still operated, while the current version of the Flash existed on "Earth-One."

Over the next few years, Schwartz offered exposure to more Earth-Two heroes, alongside their Earth-One counterparts: meetings between the Silver Age and Golden Age Flashes, Green Lanterns, and Atoms became common, and the Justice Society began annual crossovers in the pages of *Justice League of America*. Beyond those appearances, more Golden Age DC heroes won their own tryouts. Starman and Black Canary teamed up in *The Brave and the Bold* #61 and #62 (1965), Dr. Fate and Hourman joined forces in *Showcase* #55 and #56 (1965), and the Spectre was revived in his own solo series beginning with *Showcase* #60 (1966), soon moving into his own comic.

BATMAN'S "NEW LOOK"

Batman and *Detective Comics* teetered on the brink of cancellation in 1964, stagnant from years of mediocre stories and art. DC's editorial director, Irwin Donenfeld, assigned the books to Schwartz with the mandate of "saving" them. Schwartz realized that Batman had, in his own words, "strayed away from the original roots of the character." The editor returned the element of mystery to Batman's tales, incorporating clues into the stories that invited the reader to solve the whodunit along with the superhero. Schwartz's most commercial alteration was in Batman's appearance: The Caped Crusader's costume was streamlined, and a yellow oval was added around his chest insignia, simulating the look of the sky-illuminating Bat-signal. This facelift, called "The New Look" Batman by fans and historians, sold solidly and rescued the "Dynamic Duo" from the chopping block.

Although these new Silver Age superheroes generated stronger sales than DC had been earning on many of its titles, circulations were still considerably lower than during the medium's heyday. "By 1962 less than a dozen publishers accounted for a total annual industry output of 350 million comic books, a drop of over 50 percent from the previous decade," reported author Bradford W. Wright in his book *Comic Book Nation* (2001).

THE MARVEL AGE

Julius Schwartz indirectly contributed to yet another substantial event: the advent of the

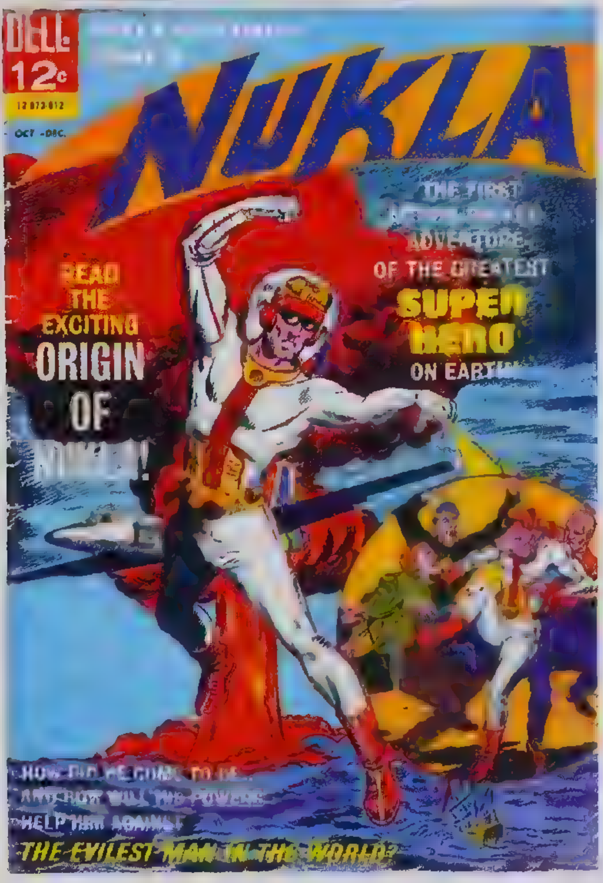
Marvel Age of comics. *Justice League* was commanding such strong sales in 1961 that it afforded bragging rights to DC publisher Jack Liebowitz during a golf game with his contemporary, Martin Goodman. Goodman, the publisher of Marvel Comics—then limping along in the marketplace with a handful of monster and thriller series—did indeed tell his staff editor/writer Stan Lee to create a group of superheroes to compete with *Justice League*. Lee had considered resigning from Marvel at the time of Goodman's directive, but was encouraged by his wife to challenge himself to try something new with this assignment. "For once I wanted to write stories that wouldn't insult the intelligence of an older reader, stories with interesting characterization, more realistic dialogue, and plots that hadn't been recycled a thousand times before," explained Lee in his biography, *Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee* (2002). Lee, along with artist Jack Kirby, created Marvel's premier superteam, and its flagship title, in *Fantastic Four* #1 (November 1961).

The Fantastic Four's complex characters—stuffy scientist Reed Richards, a.k.a. the malleable Mr. Fantastic; his shy fiancée, Sue Storm, the disappearing Invisible Girl; her fiery-tempered teen brother, Johnny, better known as the new Human Torch; and Richards' brusque friend, ace pilot Ben Grimm, the grotesque man-monster called the Thing—each had personality quirks that frequently thrust the "FF" into verbal and physical conflict, yet they set their differences aside in times of crisis. They were a family, and the most realistically portrayed comic-book superheroes readers had ever seen. *Fantastic Four* instantly became Marvel's best-seller.

The Fantastic Four may have been inspired by the Justice League of America (JLA), but they shared no other traits. The FF was the JLA through a refractive lens: the Justice Leaguers exemplified camaraderie and teamwork, its members (except for Aquaman) concealed their true identities behind their colorful superguises, and its heroes lived in fictional cities (Metropolis, Gotham City, Central City, and others); on the other hand, the FF bickered incessantly, they saw no reason to conceal their superpowers behind alter egos, and they resided in the "real" world city of New York.

Over the next few years, Lee—with Kirby, Steve Ditko, and other artists—unleashed a plethora of problem-plagued powerhouses, including the gamma-irradiated Incredible Hulk; the mighty Thor, god of thunder; the occult-based Doctor Strange; the sightless superhero Daredevil; and the outcast society of mutants known as the X-Men. Golden Age stalwarts Sub-Mariner and Captain America were rejuvenated and fought against and/or alongside the newer Marvel characters. The breakaway superhero in the burgeoning Marvel universe was the Amazing Spider-Man, who, behind his webbed mask, was actually an angst-ridden teenage nebbish named Peter Parker. Marvel's offbeat, flawed superheroes were embraced by the 1960s counterculture, particularly on college campuses.

With each new series, the differences between Marvel's and DC's titles became progressively apparent. "DC's comic books were the image of affluent America," noted Wright, while Marvel's plopped its heroes onto the dirty streets of Manhattan—and sometimes its boroughs—where average Joes were often frightened by or angered at these strange beings. DC's villains were usually stereotyped scofflaws with gimmicky weapons, whereas Marvel's bad guys were cold war spies, grandiloquent warlords, and rotten rabble-rousers with superpowers of their own. DC's heroes usually met as allies when battling a common enemy, but Marvel's heroes generally clashed within moments of an encounter. DC's stories were more traditionally based good-versus-evil yarns, while Marvel sometimes dealt with issues like campus unrest and corrupt politicians. Even the editorial tone between the two publishers varied: DC's letters columns featured articulate, sometimes chiding, and usually faceless responses to readers, while Marvel's—generally in Lee's voice—were amiable and teeming with good-natured hyperbole. DC's stories were largely uncredited, but Marvel's creative staff, from the writer down the chain to the colorist, got their due in print, with endearing nicknames attached (Stan "The Man" Lee, Jack "King" Kirby, and "Jazzy" Johnny Romita, to name a few).


DELL
12¢
OCT-DEC.
NUKLA
THE FIRST ADVENTURE OF THE GREATEST SUPER HERO ON EARTH
READ THE EXCITING ORIGIN OF NUKLA!
THE EVILEST MAN IN THE WORLD?

Nukla #1 © 1965 Dell. (Cover art by Dick Giordano and Sal Trapani.)

Reflecting the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Marvel pioneered the racial integration of the formerly all-white superhero genre. Lee and Kirby introduced the first black superhero in mainstream comics, the Black Panther, in *Fantastic Four*, who was followed by Marvel's first African-American superhero, the Falcon, in *Captain America*.

SUPERHERO-A-GO-GO

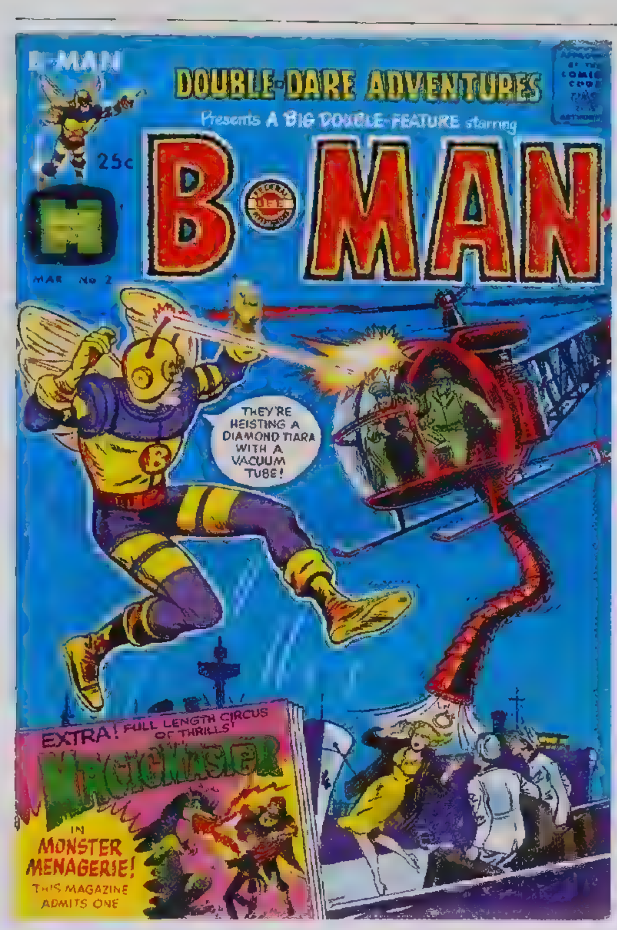
Superheroes originating or returning to action during the Silver Age include Charlton Comics' Captain Atom; Dell Comics' atomic ace Nukla; Gold Key Comics' *Magnus Robot Fighter* and *Dr. Solar, Man of the Atom* (revived in the 1990s by Valiant Comics); ACG (American Comics Group)'s Magicman and Nemesis, starring in the anthologies *Forbidden Worlds* and *Adventures into the Unknown*; fly-by-night M.F. Publications' Captain Marvel, an appropriation of a classic appellation, featuring a superhero who split his body into separate parts by yelling, of all things, "Split!" (similarly, M.F. ripped off other Golden Age heroes' names for its villains: Plastic Man and Dr. Fate); Harvey Comics' Spyman (who fought bad guys with his "electro-robot hand"), Jigsaw (a "splitting" hero, like M.F.'s Captain Marvel), icy Jack Q. Frost, and aquatic Pirana, plus reprints of legendary superhero series *The Spirit* and *The Fighting American*; Archie Comics' Mighty Crusaders, the Fly (later Fly-Man), and Jaguar, as well as superhero versions of its teenage characters, *Archie* as *Pureheart the Powerful* and *Jughead* as *Captain Hero* (Archie's girlfriend Betty even donned a guise to become Superteen!); and *MAD* magazine's superhero parody, Don Martin's *Captain Klutz*.

Two small comic-book publishers distinguished themselves with thought-provoking takes on the superhero genre. Tower Comics' lauded T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, which featured artwork by renowned comics artist Wally Wood; and Charlton Comics' "Action Heroes" line, which included Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, Sarge Steel, Nightshade, the Question, Judomaster, and Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt.

"BATMANIA" INSPIRES TV SUPERHEROES

1966 was the year of the superhero. *Batman* (1966–1968), the kitschy send-up starring Adam West in the title role, premiered on ABC in January of that year to instant acclaim. The show satisfied a wide demographic spread—children, mesmerized by its action; teens, especially girls, for the fashions and heartthrob Burt Ward as Robin the Boy Wonder; and adults, in tune with the camp humor and double-entendres that eluded kids' understanding. Universal exploitation of Batman made "Batmania" an inexorable phenomenon.

Superheroes invaded the television airwaves during the mid-1960s: *Captain Nice, Mr. Terrific, Space Ghost, Birdman and the Galaxy Trio, The Green Hornet, The New Adventures of Superman,* and *Aquaman* were among the live-action and animated entries. Many of Marvel's characters starred in cartoon programs: Captain America, Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, and Sub-Mariner rotated days on the syndicated *Marvel Super Heroes*, and both *Fantastic Four* and *Spider-Man* appeared on


B-MAN
DOUBLE-DARE ADVENTURES
Presents A BIG DOUBLE-FEATURE starring
25¢
B-MAN
MAR No 2
THEY'RE HEISTING A DIAMOND TIARA WITH A VACUUM TUBE!
EXTRA! FULL LENGTH CIRCUS OF THRILLS!
MAGICMASTER
IN MONSTER MENAGERIE!
THIS MAGAZINE ADMITS ONE

Double-Dare Adventures #2 © 1967 Harvey Comics. (Cover art by Joe Simon.)

Saturday-morning TV and in a wealth of toy and consumer-product licensing.

MARVEL TAKES THE LEAD

The superhero craze fizzled by 1968, driving some smaller publishers out of business. Even the oldest comics company got a rude awakening, as DC was overtaken by Marvel as the industry leader. Popular artist Carmine Infantino was instated as DC's art director, with the mission of making the line's covers more appealing to the potential consumer. Infantino was soon appointed editorial director and elected to take on Marvel to regain his company's former stature. He shook up the status quo in some of the superhero books—Wonder Woman was stripped of her superpowers; *Amazing Spider-Man* artist Steve Ditko defected to DC to launch the offbeat superhero comics *Beware the Creeper* and *The Hawk and the Dove*; and superstar artist Neal Adams began to transform Batman from a masked detective to a dark avenger of the night.

But Marvel's superheroes continued to outsell DC's by the end of 1969. DC ended the Silver Age with the same dilemma it faced at the beginning of the era: how to make its superhero comics popular again.

Bronze Age (1970–1980)

During the 1960s, Marvel Comics snuck up on DC Comics and usurped the industry's number-one spot. DC's editorial director, Carmine Infantino, started the 1970s with both guns blazing, vowing to regain DC's market share. The biggest bullet in Infantino's holster was the illustrious Jack Kirby, the veteran artist who co-created most of Marvel's major superheroes, including Captain America, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, and the X-Men.

In 1970 Kirby began working exclusively for DC and introduced a mythic tapestry into the company's universe, a series of four interlocking series—three new books of his own design, *The New Gods, The Forever People,* and *Mister Miracle,* plus a revamp of DC's long-running *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*—under the umbrella title "The Fourth World." Among its gaggle of gods, both good and evil, stood Darkseid, DC's first utterly malevolent villain. Kirby's vigorous artwork and concepts recharged DC with an energy never before seen at the company. *But not enough people are buying it,* thought DC, and Kirby's Fourth World died after two years, although the characters have continued to exist for decades. After follow-ups, including *The Demon, OMAC, Sandman,* and *Kamandi, the Last Boy on Earth,* Kirby returned to Marvel.

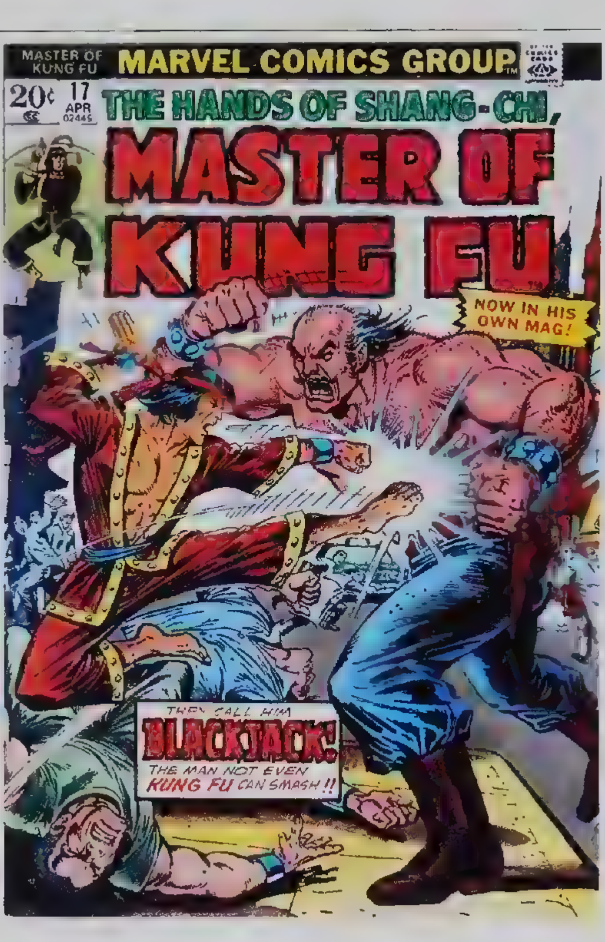
SUPERHERO RELEVANCE

Green Lantern/Green Arrow #76 (1970) was a revolutionary step forward for DC Comics. It borrowed from Marvel Comics' propensity toward argumentative superheroes, but with "GL" and "GA," their struggles were ideological debates. GL, a power-ring-wielding intergalactic cop, represented the conservative right, while "GA was the voice of the streets, of the left," writer Denny O'Neil declared in the 2003 History Channel documentary *Comic Book Superheroes: Unmasked.* With artist Neal Adams, O'Neil took this groundbreaking series into realms political, radical, and racial, but the market was unprepared for its level of sophistication and *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* was canceled with issue #89 (1972). *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* put the industry on notice, however, proving that superheroes' exploits could involve matters beyond skirmishes with supervillains.

For the first few years of the 1970s, contemporary thematic material—dubbed "relevance" by those in the biz—became common in many DC books: Robin the Teen (formerly "Boy") Wonder left Batman for college and took on campus unrest, Barbara (Batgirl) Gordon went to Washington, D.C., to tackle crime as a congresswoman, and the Justice League of America battled polluters. Having revitalized long-running DC heroes from the Flash to Batman, editor Julius Schwartz now took charge of Superman. *Superman* #233 (1971) started a new era for DC's flagship hero, updating his alter ego, Clark Kent, to a television reporter and eliminating his weakness to kryptonite, but those changes were short-lived. Now that the "camp" superhero fad was over, Schwartz also oversaw a revitalization of Batman for the second time. Batman's tales, in his own series and in *Detective Comics,* shied away from this relevance trend and veered more into gothic terrain, returning the hero to his original, baleful nature.

MARVEL BREAKS NEW GROUND

A three-issue, anti-drug story Stan Lee penned for *The Amazing Spider-Man* #96 through #98 (1971) was rejected by the industry's censorship board, the Comics Code Authority (CCA). Lee lobbied Marvel publisher Martin Goodman to resist the CCA and print the issues, which Marvel did—*without* the Code's seal of approval, the first time a major comic-book publisher had exercised such defiance. The CCA, in response, relaxed some of its requirements to more adequately address societal changes.


MASTER OF KUNG FU
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
20¢ 17 APR
THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU
NOW IN HIS OWN MAG!
THEY CALL HIM BLACKJACK!
THE MAN NOT EVEN KUNG FU CAN SMASH!!

Master of Kung Fu #17 © 1974 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jim Starlin and Ernie Chua.)

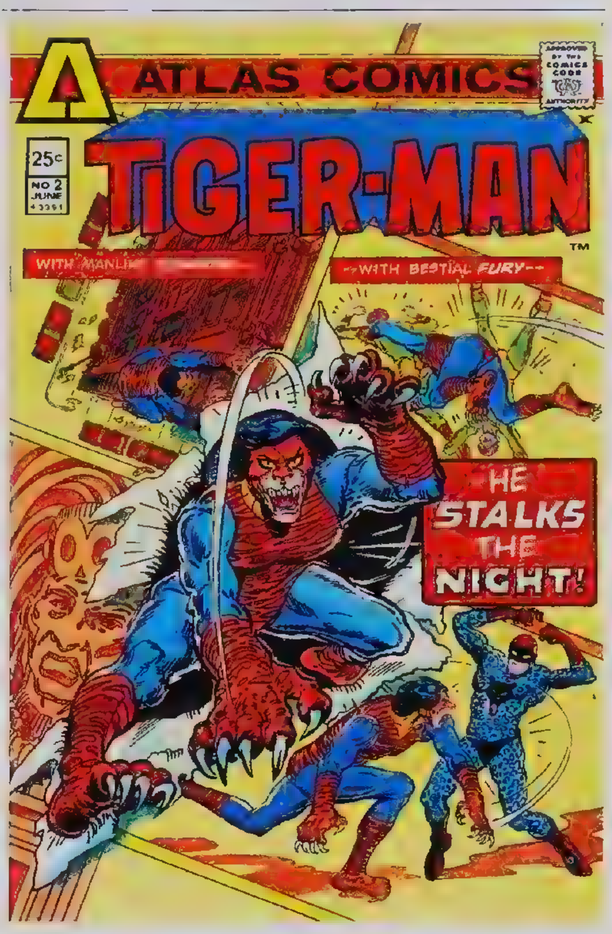
One of those liberalizations permitted the depiction of the undead, which had been taboo since the implementation of the CCA in the mid-1950s. Marvel took full advantage of this, fostering a 1970s horror-comics fad with titles including *Ghost Rider, The Son of Satan, Man-Thing, The Tomb of Dracula,* and *Werewolf by Night*—series that occurred inside the workings of the Marvel superhero continuity (DC published its applauded *Swamp Thing* series during this period). Marvel steered two other Bronze Age industry movements: "sword and sorcery," beginning in 1970 with its adaptations and continuations of Robert E. Howard's fantasy hero Conan the Barbarian; and Kung Fu, through *Master of Kung Fu, Iron Fist* and others. And a cinema trend—"blaxploitation," low-budget action films starring black actors—inspired *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* #1 (1972), the first comic book to headline an African-American superhero (although other black superheroes preceded him—notably the Black Panther in 1966), ushering in multiculturalism in mainstream comics.

Marvel continued to build upon its Silver Age foundation of human heroes with "real" problems. In the controversial *The Amazing Spider-Man* #121 (1973), the hero did *not* save the day, as Gwen Stacy, girlfriend of Spidey's alter ego, Peter Parker, died at the hands of the villainous Green Goblin. Just eight issues later, in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #129 (1974), the beleaguered wall-crawler was targeted by the assassin-for-hire called the Punisher, a dangerous enemy of organized crime whose methods were sometimes more brutal than his enemies', and later that year, in *The Incredible Hulk* #181, the Green Goliath battled the feral Canadian superhero Wolverine. Brandishing retractable claws forged of the unbreakable metal adamantium, Wolverine's "natural inclination was to disembowel an antagonist without a second thought," notes Les Daniels in *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics* (1992).

Both the Punisher and Wolverine premiered in 1974, the year that U.S. president Richard Nixon resigned from office due to his role in the Watergate scandal. The American people, particularly its youth, had grown jaded by a leader who lied to them. Readers knew exactly where they stood with visceral heroes like Wolverine and the Punisher: there was no talk, no compromise, no manipulation, only quick, decisive action. The Punisher and Wolverine were anti-heroes for a cynical generation, and would grow into superstardom.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

The Bronze Age re-popularized heroes of yesterday. DC's noir interpretation of *The Shadow* won acclaim. DC also obtained publishing rights for superheroes previously under the jurisdiction of Fawcett Publications and Quality Comics, the results being its *Shazam!* series (starring the original Captain Marvel) and its superteam title, *Freedom Fighters* (with Uncle Sam, Phantom Lady, and others). Marvel published *Doc Savage*, one of the major forebears of modern superheroes.



Tiger-Man #2 © 1975 Atlas Comics. (Cover art by Frank Thorne.)

One 1975 Marvel Comics revival produced unparalleled results. *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 introduced a new team of offbeat superheroes—multicultural mutants including Storm (African), Colossus (Russian), Nightcrawler (German), Sunfire (Japanese), and Wolverine (Canadian)—and began its trek toward becoming Marvel's number-one series.

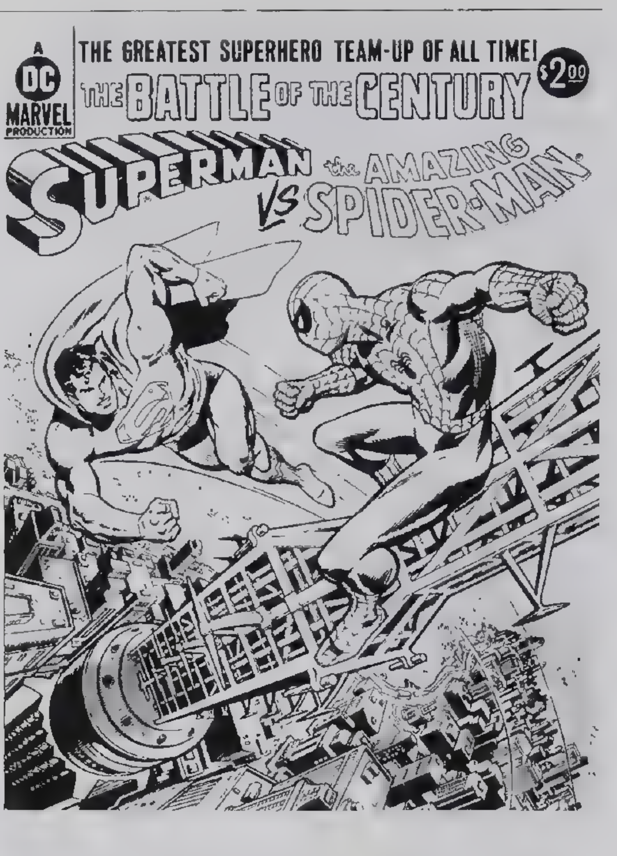
Lackluster sales did not encourage many publishers to attempt superhero comics during the Bronze Age, but a few gave it the old college try: Atlas Comics produced a diverse but short-lived comics line in the mid-1970s, including superheroes Tiger-Man and the Destructor, and longtime player Charlton Comics published King Features' jungle hero *The Phantom* and introduced a wry superhero parody, *E-Man*.

DC VS. MARVEL

DC's Infantino-steered accomplishments narrowed the sales gap between his company and its competitor. Still, Marvel largely dominated the entire decade, although a 1976 project would unite the publishers on equal ground. *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man,* a one-hundred page, tabloid-sized special edition by Gerry Conway, Ross Andru, and Dick Giordano, mixed up DC's and Marvel's top superheroes in a momentous clash followed by "the greatest team-up of all time." Infantino worked with Marvel's Lee to nurture the bestseller, but before a sequel could be brokered, Infantino and DC parted company. Children's magazine publisher Jenette Kahn replaced him as DC's head, but her long, impressive tenure would begin on a bumpy path. The quality of DC's titles suffered later in the decade, and the company's content expansion—the highly promoted "DC Explosion" in 1977—led to a market glut and a devastating "DC Implosion" in 1978.

Both DC and Marvel benefited from multimedia visibility of their superheroes during the Bronze Age. Mego Toys' "World's Greatest Super-Heroes" eight-inch action figures funneled icons as diverse as Superman, Spider-Man, Conan, and Wonder Girl into a shared commercial line. Hostess Twinkies sponsored a popular series of one-page comics that appeared as house ads in Marvel and DC comics, featuring famous superheroes as product pitchmen. The Justice League ventured to animated television in ABC's *Super Friends,* and live-action superheroes Captain Marvel (in *Shazam!*), Isis, and ElectraWoman and DynaGirl starred on Saturday-morning TV. *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman, The Incredible Hulk,* and *The Amazing Spider-Man* were weekly CBS dramatic series, and the multi-million-dollar theatrical blockbuster *Superman: The Movie* (1978) set box-office records (for the time). Spider-Man and Superman both appeared in newspaper comic strips. The merchandising of superheroes became big business, though readership of the comic books themselves continued a gradual decline.

By the end of the 1970s, most traditional outlets for comics like newsstands and drug stores stopped carrying comic books, since their low profit margin offered little incentive for shelf display. Print runs of individual titles, in many cases exceeding one million copies per issue during the 1940s, had slipped to several hundred thousand, at best. Television (broadcast and cable), special effects–laden movies, and the emerging video game and computer technologies now competed with comics for the young consumer's interest. Yet this most persistent of art forms, comics, stood poised to begin a path of rediscovery as the new decade dawned.


A DC MARVEL PRODUCTION
THE GREATEST SUPERHERO TEAM-UP OF ALL TIME!
THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY
$2.00
SUPERMAN vs the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man © 1976 DC/ Marvel. (Cover art by Ross Andru and Dick Giordano.)

Late Bronze Age (1980–1984)

By the later years of comics' Bronze Age (1980–1984), both comics and America were in a period of transition. American society in the real world had responded to escalating crime, violence, and ethical deterioration with cynicism, and could no longer relate to the traditional, altruistic do-gooder. "Superheroes needed a *reason* to be superheroes," stated television screenwriter James Grant Goldin in the 2003 History Channel documentary *Comic Book Superheroes: Un-*

masked, when referring to post-1980 costumed crime fighters. And thus was born the "new" superhero, motivated into action by stimuli other than "saving the day."

NEW DIRECTIONS AND THE DIRECT MARKET

As the writer/artist of Marvel Comics' *Daredevil* during the early 1980s, Frank Miller transformed what was once a second-banana comic book into a compelling study of one man's struggle against a vast and seemingly unstoppable network of crime. In late 1980, Miller introduced Elektra as Daredevil's former lover turned assassin-for-hire. Like many comic-book characters, Elektra had survived the murder of a parent, but instead of focusing her emotions into benevolence, she mastered martial arts and sold her services as a professional killer. While her marks usually represented the scum of the earth, Elektra executed them efficiently, without compunction—and readers applauded her bluntness. Elektra joined the Punisher and Wolverine as Marvel's anti-heroes. Yet in the early Modern Age their brutal methods were toned down due to the censorship of the Comics Code Authority.

Comic books had remained essentially the same: a 64- or 32-page periodical published on inexpensive newsprint paper. That format began a metamorphosis in 1981. Comic-book venues were dwindling, as newsstands, drug stores, and other outlets stopped selling them due to their low profit margin. Specialty shops—described in *Comic Book Superheroes: Unmasked* as "private clubs catering to a hardcore base of comic-book fans"—began carrying new titles, offering comic-book publishers a fresh lease on life.

This "direct sales" market, where retailers ordered a finite number of copies of each series, offered three benefits: it helped the industry distribute its product straight to the consumer, it eliminated the return of unsold copies, and it sidestepped the approval of the CCA. DC Comics was the first major publisher to explore the direct market with "direct only" one-shots, including *Madame Xanadu* (1981). Graphic novels—epic stories in one longer, and sometimes larger, package—were introduced to help the medium nurture storylines too complex for monthly serialized periodicals.

CREATOR-OWNED COMIC BOOKS

"Independent" publishers that catered to the direct market entered the business. San Diego, California-based Pacific Comics opened shop in December 1981 with *Captain Victory and the Galactic Rangers* #1, written and illustrated by the legendary Jack "King" Kirby (co-creator of Captain America, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, and countless other superheroes), its first "creator-owned" comic book, allowing Kirby to retain copyright of the characters.

Creator ownership, the absence of Comics Code restrictions, and upscale printing created an alluring scent that attracted visionary comic-book writers and artists to deeply invest themselves into their work. More independents arose—like Capital Comics, Eclipse Comics, Comico the Comic Company, First Comics, and Dark Horse Comics—and creator-driven, cutting-edge superheroes premiered from these houses, including Mike Baron and Steve Rude's *Nexus,* Matt Wagner's *Grendel* and *Mage,* Bill Willingham's *Elementals,* Mark Evanier and Dan Spiegle's *Crossfire,* Evanier and Will Meugniot's *DNAgents,* Dave Stevens' Rocketeer (in the *Pacific* [Comics] *Presents* anthology), Neal Adams' *Ms. Mystic,* and Mark Verheiden and Chris Warner's *The American.* Many of these new superheroes scoffed at historic mores and pushed the medium into grittier, sexier, and more thought-provoking terrain.

Modern Age (1985-Present)

By the mid-1980s, the Comics Code became more relaxed. Marvel published *Wolverine* and *The Punisher* titles, and examined racial prejudice in *X-Men.* DC revamped its old-guard superhero line in its continuity-altering twelve-issue series *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (1985–1986), which included the deaths of two major characters: Supergirl and the Flash. Readers discovered in the pages of *The New Teen Titans* that team member Speedy had a child out of wedlock, and over at Marvel, author Bill Mantlo pinpointed child abuse as the root of the Incredible Hulk's uncontrollable anger. Frank Miller returned to superheroes with *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), in which a surly older Batman takes up arms to save Gotham City from rampant crime. These were not your father's superheroes: no longer men in capes who flew around saving the day, the superhero had become a reflection of the world around him: dark, determined, and no-nonsense.

Superhero subject matter could no longer be neatly resolved in one 32-page story. Nowhere is this better evidenced than in DC's *Watchmen* (1986–1987), a densely plotted and rendered twelve-issue series by writer Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons, two of a contingent of British creators who entered American comics in the 1980s. *Watchmen* portrays the personal struggles of a discordant superteam and their foibles—which include sexual impotence and strategic genocide—and stripped superheroes of any innocence they may have still held in the eyes of a comic-buying public.

Superhero titles such as *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight* created a more literary climate in the comics business. Writer Neil Gaiman, another Brit, entered the field in the late 1980s and rose to acclaim with his award-winning DC title *The Sandman* (1989–1996), featuring the dream lord Morpheus. While the events of Sandman transpired within the so-called DC universe, uniformed superheroes were mostly absent. Gaiman's series was the cornerstone of DC's imprint, Vertigo, which has featured avant garde anti-heroes like John Constantine in *Hellblazer* and Jesse Custer in *Preacher*. Pioneering protagonists like James O'Barr's disturbing Crow, who rose from the dead to become a crime fighter, and Concrete, an Earthman whose brain was grafted into a rock-hard alien body, surfaced from independent companies and continued the reinvention of the superhero.

FROM BOOM TO BUST

By the early 1990s, comic-book sales were shrinking. Literary kudos aside, comics did not appeal to most kids, who by this time were distracted by a cornucopia of entertainment options. Additionally, the era of the provocative superhero had created a level of sophistication beyond the interest of most children—hyperactive computer games and violent movies offered more eye candy.

Comics received a temporary financial booster shot from a speculation frenzy, predicated upon the revelation that rare Golden Age comic books were, in the 1990s, commanding prices of thousands of dollars. *There's money in collecting comic books*, the thinking went, and kids of all ages poured into comics shops buying and hoarding comics. Variant covers and cover enhancements lured consumers into buying multiples of the same book, and sales of special issues climbed into the millions, making some royalty-earning or rights-holding artists deliriously wealthy. Heavily armed counter-terrorists, disenfranchised street fighters, and demonic entities became the norm in the world of superheroes. "Events" shook up the status quo for longtime superheroes, like the (temporary) death of Superman in 1992.

During this period of explosive growth, superhero universes sprouted from a variety of companies, including Dark Horse (which revealed its "Comics' Greatest World," with *Barb Wire, X, The Machine*, and *Ghost*); Malibu Comics (whose "Ultraverse" introduced *Prime, Prototype*, and *Hardcase*); and Valiant Comics (which published *Solar, Rai, Magnus Robot Fighter*, and *Bloodshot*). The major newsmaker of the era was Image Comics, founded when Marvel's best-selling artists (including Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, and Rob Liefeld) left to create their own company and publish their own material (*Spawn, WildC.A.T.S*, and *Youngblood*). Two other hot Marvel artists soon defected to Image, the results being Erik Larsen's *The Savage Dragon* and Whilce Portacio's *Wetworks*.

This period also saw the genre of "Bad Girl art" emerge. Bad Girl art was birthed out of a trend in comics, film, and other media toward strong, positive heroines with attitude (think *Alien*'s Ellen Ripley and Lara Croft). Early precursors of the era's Bad Girl art include Warren Publishing's dark 1970s temptress Vampirella and Frank Miller's 1980s assassin Elektra. In the 1990s these bad babes included the likes of Chaos! Comics' Lady

Death (often cited by comic-book historians as the character that ignited the trend); Rob Liefeld's Glory and Avengelyne; London Nights' Razor; Image Comics' Witchblade; Dark Horse's Ghost and Barb Wire; Crusade Comics' Shi; and a revamped and resurrected Elektra.

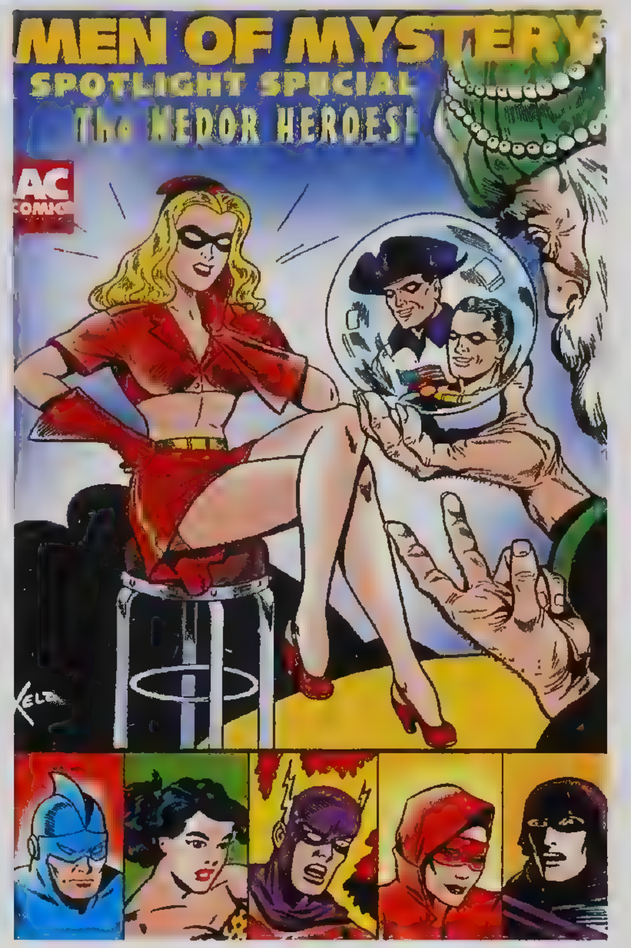
Speculators finally got wise and defected from the fold in the mid-1990s, causing an abrupt collapse that depressed the marketplace. Due to the crash and costly mistakes by its then owner, Ronald Perleman, Marvel Comics filed for bankruptcy in 1996. "Comic books are dead," the skeptics cried.

MULTIMEDIA SUPERHEROES

But superheroes lived. Beginning with director Tim Burton's blockbuster movie *Batman* (1989), superheroes have maintained constant visibility in film, on television, in video games, on apparel, as toys, and on Internet sites. This media awareness has hindered and helped superhero comic books. Negatively, superheroes in mass media feed the entertainment options that have lured consumers away from comics reading. Positively, the income generated by the licensing of comics characters has allowed the comic-book business to stay alive; under new ownership, Marvel paid off its creditors and emerged from bankruptcy in 1998.

The audience for superhero comic books is small but remarkably loyal. Sales of collected editions have been encouragingly healthy, however, with the public's familiarity with superheroes helping sell trade paperbacks to the bookstore market. Important new comics publishers have arisen in recent years, including IDW Publishing, BOOM! Studios, and Dynamite Entertainment. Although many have prophesied the death of print media, Marvel and DC have both made their comics available in digital media. One can now read comics online, in computers, on smartphones, and on tablets like the iPad.

The biggest news for the superhero genre in the early twenty-first century is its conquest of movies and television, through which classic comics heroes have won a far greater, worldwide audience. As a result, major movie companies have taken control of the "Big Two" superhero comics publishers, DC and Marvel.



Men of Mystery Spotlight Special #1 © 2001 AC Comics. (Cover art by Alex Schomburg.)

In 1989, DC's parent company shifted from Warner Publishing to Warner Bros., the film and television studio, and DC found itself directed to feed a media machine. Its superheroes have since been regularly translated to film and video. Examples include (but are not restricted to) the live-action movie *Batman* (1989) and its three sequels, TV's *The Flash* (1990–1991), the long-running *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992) and its continuations, the romantic action/comedy *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (1993–1997), the teen drama *Smallville* (2001–2011), and the Cartoon Network's animated *Justice League Unlimited* (2004–2006) and *Teen Titans* (2003–2006) programs. The Batman film franchise was relaunched in 2005 with *Batman Begins*, directed by Christopher Nolan and starring Christian Bale. Zack Snyder directed the 2009 live action film adaptation of *Watchmen*. The first *Green Lantern* live action movie premiered in 2011, and the *Superman* film franchise relaunched with *The Man of Steel*, produced by Nolan and directed by Snyder, in 2013.

Warner Bros. restructured DC in 2009, when it announced that DC Comics would become a subsidiary of the company DC Entertainment, which now handles DC's characters in all media including comics. Diane Nelson, previously the president of Warner Premiere, became president of both DC Entertainment and DC Comics. Former DC Comics president and publisher Paul Levitz became a contributing editor and consultant. But comics veterans still supervise the comics themselves. In 2010 artist Jim Lee and Dan DiDio became co-publishers of DC Comics, and writer Geoff Johns became its chief creative officer. In March 2011 Cartoon Network announced that *DC Nation*, a programming block featuring DC Comics characters, would premiere in 2012 both on television and online.

Marvel has had extraordinary success in launching its comics characters into live action motion pictures, ever since the first *X-Men* movie (2000), followed by its sequels, all from Twentieth Century-Fox. Director Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* (2002) from Sony Pictures was a true blockbuster, which also led to successful sequels in 2004 and 2007, and paved the way for the Marc Webb-directed *Amazing Spider-Man* (2012). Other movies featuring Marvel Comics stars include *Daredevil* (2003), *Hulk* (2003), *Elektra* (2005), *Fantastic Four* (2005), and *Ghost Rider* (2007).

Marvel Studios, founded in 1996, co-produces films based on Marvel characters in partnership with other film studios such as Fox and Sony. Lately Marvel Studios has taken a more direct role, independently producing such major motion pictures as *Iron Man* (2008), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Thor* (2011), and *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011).

The Walt Disney Company bought Marvel Entertainment in 2009. Disney began distributing Marvel's independently produced films with *The Avengers* (2012) and *Iron Man 3* (2013). A new animated series, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, debuted on the Disney XD digital network in 2012. It remains to be seen what else will result from the union of Disney and Marvel, the linking of two great traditions in American popular entertainment and cartoon art.

Most recent superhero movies and television series draw from the large, time-tested pantheons of heroes from Marvel and DC Comics. However, it should be no surprise that filmmakers and television show creators have attempted to devise their own superheroes, with varying degrees of success. Over a decade before he directed *Spider-Man* (2002), Sam Raimi combined the horror and superhero genres in his cult classic movie *Darkman* (1990), starring Liam Neeson as the title character, a disfigured scientist who gains enhanced strength and uses masks of synthetic skin to impersonate other people. In the film *Unbreakable* (2000), written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan and starring Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson, a security guard named David Dunn realizes he has superhuman powers and becomes a vigilante. A highly realistic treatment of superhero tropes, the film did not do well at the box office. Robert Rodriguez directed and co-wrote *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl in 3-D* (2005), a movie aimed at children, but it fared poorly at American theaters. Far more successful films featuring original superhero creations are Brad Bird's computer-animated blockbuster for Pixar, *The Incredibles* (2004) and *Hancock* (2008), starring Will Smith.

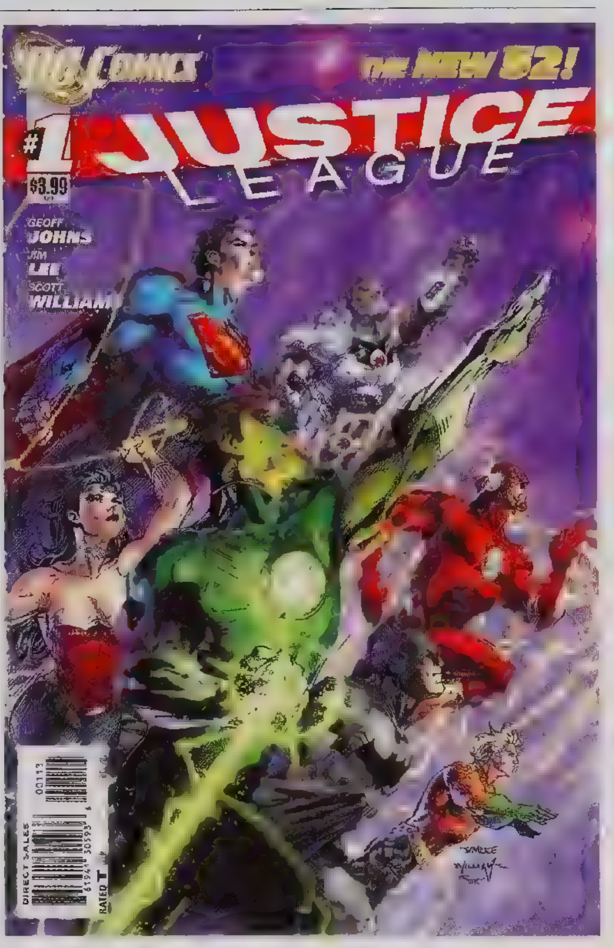
On television, NBC's *Heroes* (2006–2010), created by writer/producer Tim Kring, was initially a tremendous hit, and has inspired various attempts to imitate its success. ABC's *No Ordinary Family* (2010–2011), starring Michael Chiklis (the Thing in the *Fantastic Four* movies) and Julie Benz (Darla in Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), was about the Powells, a California family who gained superhuman powers. In NBC's *The Cape* (2011), starring David Lyons and Summer Glau (from Whedon's *Firefly*), Lyons plays a former police detective who becomes a costumed crime fighter. Both series were quickly canceled.

Paul Dini, a writer/producer for the classic *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992–1995), created the live-action series *Tower Prep* (2010–)

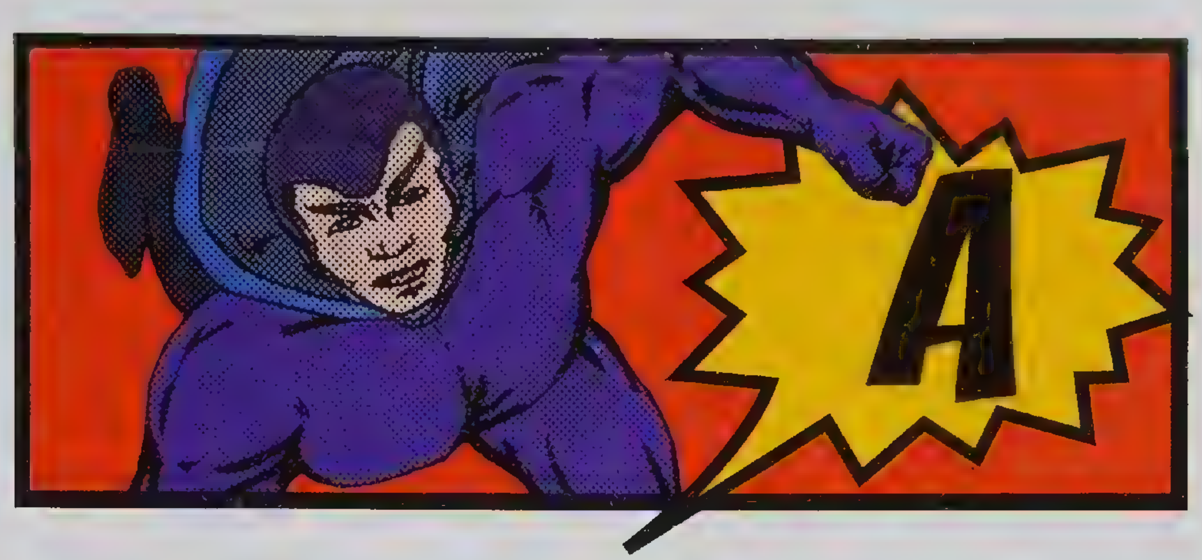
for Cartoon Network. Like a cross between *X-Men* and *The Prisoner, Tower Prep* is about teenagers with paranormal powers who are held prisoner at a mysterious private school. The British television series *Misfits* (2009–) concerns a group of teenage delinquents who gained superhuman abilities in an electrical storm in the fictional village of Wertham (obviously named after Dr. Frederic Wertham, archfoe of superhero comics). Telecast in the United Kingdom on the digital channel E4, *Misfits* can be seen online in the United States on Hulu. A recent addition is *Alphas,* which debuted on Syfy in 2011, in which a psychiatrist played by David Strathairn leads a team of crime fighters with paranormal "Alpha Skills."

Even Marvel legend Stan Lee co-founded the company POW! Entertainment (standing for "Purveyors of Wonder") in 2001, through which he co-creates new superheroes for various media. Among Lee's POW! Projects are the direct-to-video superhero films *Lightspeed* (2006) and *Mosaic* (2007), the reality TV series *Who Wants to Be a Superhero?* (2006–2007), the Japanese anime series *Heroman* (2010), and the Guardian Project (2011), which creates superheroes for each team in the National Hockey League. In 2011 Lee and POW! developed *The Governator,* which he envisioned as an animated series starring former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as a superhero.

Yet despite the superheroes' success in other media, comics remain the creative center of the genre. As scholar Peter Coogan stated in his *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre* (2006), "Comics are the natural home for the superhero genre because of the way they can seamlessly combine intense action, ordinary daily life, and fantastic images. The superhero genre and comics have been linked—oftentimes conflated—since the inception of the genre." The look, shape, and format of comic books will undoubtedly continue to evolve in the years to come to match the changing tastes of consumers and advances in technology. But, given its mass-media popularity, regardless of the naysayers, the superhero—and, no doubt, the superhero comic book, whether in traditional pamphlet format, trade paperback collections, or digital form—will continue to endure. —*Edited by Gina Misiroglu, with contributions from Michael Eury and Peter Sanderson*



Justice League #1 © 2011 DC Comics. (Cover art by Jim Lee and Scott Williams.)



Adam Strange

Among the many things gripping the imaginations of children in the late 1950s were the emerging superheroes of the Silver Age of comics (1956–1969) and the beginnings of the space race. DC Comics decided to combine those two interests by launching a pair of space heroes in its tryout comic book *Showcase*. The first to appear was the futuristic spaceman, Space Ranger, while the second (who premiered in *Showcase* #17 in late 1958) was Adam Strange, overseen by longtime science fiction fan and editor Julius Schwartz. His first choice as artist was Carmine Infantino, but as he was currently entertaining the troops in Korea, Mike Sekowsky was drafted in for the first three *Showcase* issues. When these proved popular, Strange moved over to the *Mystery in Space* comic, where he enjoyed a run of fifty issues, most of them drawn by Infantino and written by the character's co-creator Gardner Fox.

Strange is first seen deep in the Andes, searching for lost cities, when some sort of beam suddenly transports him light years across the universe to the planet Rann, where he is confronted by those science fiction staples, the pretty girl and the raging monster. Having dispatched the beast, Strange and his maiden-in-distress (rejoicing in the suitably off-worldly name Alanna) travel to the nearest city with her father, a scientist called Sardath. It turns out that the transporter ray—a zeta-beam—was only intended to contact far-off planets and that Strange's precipitous arrival on Rann was accidental. Unfortunately, the effect of the beam wears off after a while, and Strange is zapped back to Earth, but he has by then developed a taste for saving far-off worlds (and far-off girls called Alanna). So each story for the next six years began with Strange whizzing around the world to catch the next zeta-beam and zoom off back to Rann.

Probably no comic series better typifies the hope and optimism of the postwar "new frontier" than Adam Strange under Fox and Infantino. Even his costume—a sleek red suit with aerodynamic jet pack and a shark fin on his cowl (rather resembling the tail fins popular on cars of the late 1950s and early 1960s)—seemed to be emblematic of the era. Infantino's art was dynamic, slick, and very stylish, and the strip was littered with the sort of stark, elegant, and futuristic cities that would have made even America's most famous and innovative architect Frank Lloyd Wright proud. Strange himself was the thinking man's superhero, preferring to use his intellect rather than his fists to defeat the menace of the week—although having his own ray gun also came in handy!

And menaces there certainly were. Seemingly every time that Strange beamed down he was confronted by a panicking Alanna, describing yet another world-shattering horror, be it Jakarta the Dust Devil (a sort of sentient dust storm); a living, tentacled world; or Ulthoon the living tornado. A particularly entertaining alien race were the cube-headed Vantorians, who struck terror into their enemies hearts with their deadly vacuum cleaners. For much of his run, Strange seemed to exist in a fictional world of his own, though he did share a villain—the insect-eyed Konjar Ro—with DC's superhero team the Justice League, resulting in a memorable meeting with those adventurers.

Although the strip had a devoted following, it was never a massive seller, and when Fox and Infantino were moved over to revive the failing *Detective Comics* the strip declined rapidly in popularity. It struggled on for a further ten issues before being replaced by the ludicrous Ultra the Multi-Alien, and Strange was banished to a life of occasional guest spots and the odd backup series. In a touching 1970s issue of *The Justice League,* Strange and Alanna finally got married, and many years later the pair appeared in a few issues of Alan Moore's revolutionary *Swamp Thing* comic. That brief revival prompted an ill-conceived, darker 1990 miniseries that was not well received by fans, and perhaps showed that the feature was very much a product of a more innocent time.

Since then, Adam Strange has appeared in limited series such as *Planet Heist* (2004–2005), *Rann-Thanagar War* (2005), *52* (2006–2007), and *Countdown to Adventure* (2007–2008). Paul Pope wrote and drew the Adam Strange serial in *Wednesday Comics* (2009). He also appeared in a 2009 episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* appropriately titled "Mystery in Space." *—DAR & PS*

Alpha Flight

"One side, super heroes ... This is a job only we can handle!" So says the team of Canadian heroes on the front cover of *Alpha Flight* #1 (August 1983). A spin-off from the ultra-popular *X-Men* series, where the characters had first appeared, the members of Alpha Flight were the creation of writer/artist John Byrne. They were also the first non-American superteam to garner their own title at Marvel Comics.

The first member of *Alpha Flight* to appear was Weapon Alpha in *X-Men* #109 (February 1978). In that story, a man named James MacDonald Hudson, garbed in a costume based on the Canadian flag, attempts to retrieve Wolverine (whom he calls "Weapon X") and return him to Canada. Defeated, Hudson returns in *X-Men* #120–#121 (April–May 1979) with a team of heroes called Alpha Flight, and they face off against the X Men. This time, Hudson calls himself "Vindicator," and he is accompanied by Sasquatch, Snowbird, Aurora, Northstar, and Shaman. The X-Men learn that, prior to joining them, Wolverine had been involved with Alpha Flight in Canada. The mutant heroes would later meet their Canadian counterparts again to stop the mystical beast Wendigo in *X-Men* #139–#140 (November–December 1980).

It would be another few years until the full story of Alpha Flight began to unspool in their own series. There, it was revealed that Hudson was a brilliant engineer who had developed a superpowered, armored suit and helmet that allowed him to channel Earth's magnetic field to fly and project force fields and concussive blasts. Stealing the suit from his employers, who wanted to use the suit for evil, Hudson sought refuge with the Canadian government. The Canadian Ministry of Defense soon put Hudson in charge of Department H, a top-secret project. Inspired by the formation of the Fantastic Four, Hudson began to assemble superpowered individuals to protect the Great White North. After his first recruit—Wolverine—left Canada, Hudson decided to lead the team as Vindicator, though he later chose the name Guardian.

Hudson's wife, Heather McNeil Hudson, had been his research assistant prior to their marriage, and she assisted him with Alpha Flight duties. When Hudson was apparently killed, she took on the battle-suit and powers of Guardian, renaming herself Vindicator. She remained the team leader on-and-off throughout its many adventures, until the resurrection of James Hudson.

Northstar and Aurora were orphaned twin brother and sister Jean-Paul and Jeanne-Marie Beaubier. Raised separately, they were unaware of the fact that they were superpowered mutants until they were teenagers. Jeanne-Marie had a difficult childhood and developed a split personality, with one side of her very uninhibited and the other side deeply religious. Jean-Paul had fared better, becoming an Olympic skiing champion (perhaps through the use of his mutant powers), but he too held a secret: He was homosexual. The Beaubiers were reunited by Hudson as members of Alpha Flight, where they discovered that their similar powers—flight and superspeed—were accented when they touched hands, allowing them to create brilliant bursts of light.

Sasquatch was Walter Langkowski, an ex-football player who became a doctor specializing in gamma radiation transformations, such as that experienced by Bruce Banner which turned him into the Hulk. Bombarding himself with radiation from his own experiments, Langkowski became able to transform himself at will to a ten-feet-tall, orange-furred creature who had super strength and stamina.

Snowbird was Narya, a demigod born to the Eskimo goddess Nelvanna. Raised on Earth by Shaman, Narya had the ability to transform into any white-colored animal from the arctic north of Canada. Narya eventually assumed the identity of Anne McKenzie, who worked for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as a records officer. Shaman was Michael Twoyoungmen, a Native American who had rejected the magical ways of his lineage to become a medical doctor. After the death of his wife and grandfather—and an estrangement from his daughter—Twoyoungmen began to study the mystical arts of the Saracee (neé Sarcee) Indian tribe. He eventually became a powerful magician.

Hudson's Department H did not only support Alpha Flight, but subsidiary groups as well; training in the lower ranks were other newer heroes as part of Beta Flight, and completely new recruits as Gamma Flight. Two Beta members graduated to Alpha Flight in the first issue of the comic. Puck was Eugene Milton Judd, a gymnastic strongman and ex-soldier-of-fortune who had been cursed with both long life and the shrinking of his body to dwarf-size. Marrina was Marrina Smallwood, a yellow-skinned, amphibious girl who could breathe underwater and swim at great speeds.

Over the years, the Alpha Flight team—headquartered in British Columbia—went through an astonishing amount of permutations. Beta and Gamma members joined, including the robotic Box, Shaman's magical daughter Talisman, insane mutant Wild Child/Wildheart, hard-skinned Diamond Lil, armored blaster Windshear, mind controllers Purple Girl and Murmur, brothers Radius and Flex who could control force fields and metals, and many others. Characters were killed (Guardian, Marrina, Snowbird, Sasquatch, Box), were resurrected (Guardian, Marrina, Snowbird, Sasquatch), went insane and were cured (Aurora, Wild Child), lost their children (Snowbird), experienced debilitating sicknesses (Northstar, Diamond Lil), were cloned (Guardian), and even changed sexes (Sasquatch)! Additionally, the Canadian government disbanded and reinstated Alpha Flight several times, and Department H itself became corrupted. Villains they fought included the Master of the World, Omega Flight, Wendigo, Ranaq the Great Devourer, the Dream Queen, Gilded Lily, and others.

As a comic book series, *Alpha Flight* was at its best under creator Byrne, but he left the series with issue #28 (November 1985), telling readers in a text piece, "I've finally told all the *Alpha Flight* stories I have to tell." A succession of writers and artists have guided the book through the years, with the most famous being newcomer Jim Lee, who made his Marvel art debut on *Alpha Flight* #51 (November 1987). *Alpha Flight* was canceled in March 1994 with issue #130, but it was revived again for a second series in August 1997, by writer Steve Seagle. This incarnation didn't last quite as long, and was canceled with issue #20 (March 1999), a victim of Marvel's bankruptcy cutbacks as much as the book's own depressed sales.

Although the series is best remembered for featuring Marvel's first gay superhero, Northstar, and for being Canadian, Alpha Flight has continued to appear in today's Marvel universe. A trio of two-pack *Alpha Flight* action figures were released in 1999 by Toy Biz, and the characters made their first animated appearance in a second-season episode of Fox's animated *X-Men* series in November 1993. In 2002, Northstar joined the cast of

Uncanny X-Men with issue #414 (December 2002), while Aurora and Wild Child became cast members of *Weapon X* with issue #1 (November 2002). Given *Alpha Flight's* popularity among fans, it was no surprise when the announcement came that Canada's premiere superhero team would once again push aside other heroes to regain its own ongoing series in 2004.This series ended after twelve issues, but Alpha Flight returned in the 2007 mini-series *Omega Flight,* in the one-shot *Chaos War: Alpha Flight* #1 (2011), and in a new 2011 *Alpha Flight* limited series. —*AM*

Alternative Superheroes

For more than half a century various writers and artists have created alternative versions of superheroes in efforts to satirize, critique, subvert, and redefine the superhero concept and genre, or view them from a new perspective. Some alternative superhero stories are funny parodies, others are serious and even disturbing.

One of the first was "Superduperman," a collaboration by editor/writer/artist Harvey Kurtzman and artist Wally Wood in *MAD* #4 (April–May 1954). This was a landmark story, not only as a devastating satire of superheroes, but also in setting the mold for parodies in *MAD Magazine* ever since. The title character is Clark Bent, a repellently grotesque social misfit, who is pathetically in love with knockout reporter Lois Pain. At the end of the story Superduperman reveals his dual identity to Lois Pain, who rejects him as a "creep." Writer Alan Moore has credited Superduperman as a major influence on his own efforts at reworking the superhero genre with *Miracleman* and *Watchmen.* Over the years *MAD* has done many other superhero parodies, including "Batboy and Rubin!" from Kurtzman's *MAD* #8 (December 1953–January 1954), which was adapted into animation in a 2011 episode of *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.*

Steve Ditko created Mr. A, in reality reporter Rex Graine, who secretly operates as a masked vigilante. Through Mr. A, Ditko expresses his adherence to Ayn Rand's Objectivist philosophy, most notably the belief that good and evil are absolutes. Mr. A first appeared in Wally Wood's magazine *Witzend* #3 in 1967.

Little known, yet still highly influential, Robert Mayer's satirical prose novel *Superfolks* was first published in 1977. Its protagonist is David Brinkley (named after the legendary television newsman), a superhero known as Indigo, who greatly resembles Superman. Indigo's superpowers faded over the years, and in the novel he is leading the life of an ordinary middle-aged, married man with children. Then Brinkley has a midlife crisis and his superpowers begin to return. The novel takes an ironic look at superheroes, exploring their attitudes towards sexuality, their psychological problems, and the potential dark side of the superhero concept. The book has influenced such comics writers as Kurt Busiek and Alan Moore.

In 1986, Marvel editor in chief Jim Shooter oversaw the creation of the New Universe line of comics, which attempted to take a more realistic approach to the superhero genre, disposing of conventions such as costumed identities. The flagship series was Shooter's *The Star Brand,* about a man named Ken Connell who acquires a tattoo that endows him with virtually limitless power. *D. P. 7* was a memorable New Universe series, created by the late Mark Gruenwald and artist Paul Ryan, about seven "displaced paranormals" who escape from a clinic that attempted to exploit their superhuman powers. The New Universe line ended in 1989, but writer Warren Ellis co-created a new version of the New Universe in the series *newuniversal,* that debuted in 2007.

In conventional superhero stories, death seems like a revolving door, since virtually every significant character who has been killed off sooner or later comes back to life. That was not the case in *Strikeforce: Morituri.* Created by writer Peter B. Gillis and artist Brent Anderson, and published by Marvel Comics, the first issue bore a cover date of December 1986. The series depicts a futuristic Earth that is under attack by an alien race called the Horde. An Earth scientist creates the Morituri Process that endows volunteers with superhuman powers — at the price of killing the subject within a year. Hence this was a superhero series in which mortality was very real.

Writer/artist Rick Veitch has created several comics series that critique the superhero genre, including *The One* (1985–1986), *The Maximortal* (1992), and perhaps most notably, *Brat Pack* (1990–1991). *Brat Pack* investigates the dark side of the relationships between superheroes and their kid sidekicks, with such teams as the racist and murderous Judge Jury and his sidekick Kid Vicious, and the gay pedophiliac Midnight Man and his kid sidekick Chippy.

In 1993 writer Alan Moore collaborated with artists Stephen Bissette and Rick Veitch on *1963,* a comics mini-series published by Image Comics that presented a satiric pastiche of the Marvel Comics of the 1960s. In text sections Moore portrayed himself as "Affable Al," in a cutting parody of "Smilin' Stan Lee's" public persona. Among the series' superheroes were Mystery Incorporated (based on the Fantastic Four); USA, Ultimate Special Agent (based on Captain America); the Unbelievable N-Man (an analogue of the Hulk); Horus, Lord of Light (a counterpart to Thor); and Johnny Beyond (a Dr. Strange-like character depicted as a beatnik).

Writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Michael Avon Oeming created *Powers,* which was originally published by Image Comics in 2000 and is now published by Marvel. *Powers* is a comic in the police procedural genre, centering on Christian Walker, a former superhero, and Deena Pilgrim, police detectives who investigate cases involving "powers," the series' term for superpowered individuals.

Alternative cartoonist Chris Ware has repeatedly used a balding, overweight, costumed figure whom he calls "the Super-Man." In *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth* (2000), the Super-Man appears to be an ordinary actor who falls to his death when he leaps off a building. In other works, such as strips in *The Acme Novelty Library Final Report to Shareholders and Saturday Afternoon Rainy Day Fun Book* (2005), the Super-Man has actual superpowers but is an amoral figure, murdering anyone who displeases him.

In *Eightball* #23 (2004), alternative cartoonist Daniel Clowes created the story of "The Death-Ray," a dark variation on the Spider-Man saga. A teenager named Andy acquires superhuman strength and a "death ray" gun that disintegrates his victims. Despite his initially idealistic intentions, Andy, as the Death Ray, is corrupted by his power and utterly alienated from the rest of humanity, and becomes a serial killer who disintegrates people for committing even minor offenses.

In recent years, both DC Comics and Marvel Comics have invited alternative and independent comics creators to do their own satiric takes on the companies' classic superheroes. DC's *Bizarro Comics* (2001) and *Bizarro World* (2006), named after Superman's "imperfect duplicate," include work by Jessica Abel, Peter Bagge, Kyle Baker, Bob Fingerman, Matt Groening (*The Simpsons*), Chip Kidd, James Kochalka, Tony Millionaire, Harvey Pekar (*American Splendor*), Paul Pope, Jeff Smith (*Bone*), and Craig Thompson. Marvel relaunched its classic title *Strange Tales* as an alternative comics showcase in 2009. The first and second *Strange Tales* miniseries featured work by Bagge, Jeffrey Brown, Molly Crabapple, Nicholas Gurewitch, Dean Haspiel, Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez (*Love and Rockets*), Jason, Terry Moore (*Echo, Strangers in Paradise*), Pekar, Pope, Alex Robinson, Stan Sakai, Dash Shaw, Ty Templeton, and Shannon Wheeler.

Another alternative vision of the superhero genre is provided by the *Wild Cards* series of prose books, ranging from short story collections to full-length novels, which began in 1986. The editor of the series is George R. R. Martin, assisted from the sixth volume on by Melinda M. Snodgrass. (Martin is now best known as the author of the best-selling series of fantasy novels, *A Song of Ice and Fire,* which is the basis for HBO's *Game of Thrones*.) Among the many science-fiction authors who have contributed to the series are Martin, *X-Men*'s Chris Claremont and the late Roger Zelazny. Marvel produced comics based upon the *Wild Cards* books in 1990 and 1991. A new prose volume in the *Wild Cards* series was published by Tor Books in June 2011 and another in 2012.

The 2010 film *Super,* written and directed by James Gunn, is a black comedy about cook Frank d'Arbo, played by Rainn Wilson (*The Office*) and comic shop employee Libby, played by Ellen Page (*Juno*), who become superheroes known as the Crimson Bolt and his sidekick Boltie. Both suffering from psychological problems, Crimson Bolt and Boltie are far more violent than conventional superheroes, willing to brutalize and even kill their adversaries. —*PS*

America's Best Comics Heroes

The Internet-era axiom that "in the future, everyone will be famous to fifteen people" rings especially true—and can sting especially sharply—for fans and creators of the comic book art form. By the mid-1990s, the man acknowledged by many as the medium's all-time finest scripter, Alan Moore, found that such acclaim brought no career security. Having authored the 1986 miniseries *Watchmen* (with artist Dave Gibbons), one of the few superhero sagas to register as legitimate literature and also an enduring favorite of hardcore fans, by 1996 Moore's position in pop-culture history was secure but his footing in the present was by no means certain. At that time, comics entrepreneur Rob Liefeld had hired Moore to reimagine a group of heroes Liefeld originally launched for Image Comics and later relocated to his own companies (first Maximum and then Awesome). These characters—including the Superman-ish hero Supreme and the Wonder Woman wannabe Glory—were in the affectionate/ironic archetype mode that Moore had pioneered, and his handling of the characters for the three companies brought the approach to a new high.

But the high proved short-lived when Awesome landed in the same historical dustbin as many other Liefeld ventures, casting Moore adrift, leaving a number of his scripts unillustrated, and turning those that were into instant collectors' items. But like the transformative traumas of superhero lore (nuclear accidents, planetary explosions, bad business plans), the experience ultimately put Moore—and his fans—in enhanced circumstances. By mid-1999 Moore had launched an imprint of his own, America's Best Comics (ABC), under successful indie upstart WildStorm (with a "firewall" promised between Moore and the editorial edicts of DC Comics, which acquired WildStorm from Image soon after Moore joined, but had alienated him some time before). With characteristic ambition, Moore imagined not just isolated adventure comics but a whole alternate universe across several titles. But, with a sadder-but-wiser pragmatism, he and his artist collaborators ceded ownership of almost all their new characters at the start, in exchange for a more immediately lucrative work-for-hire deal.

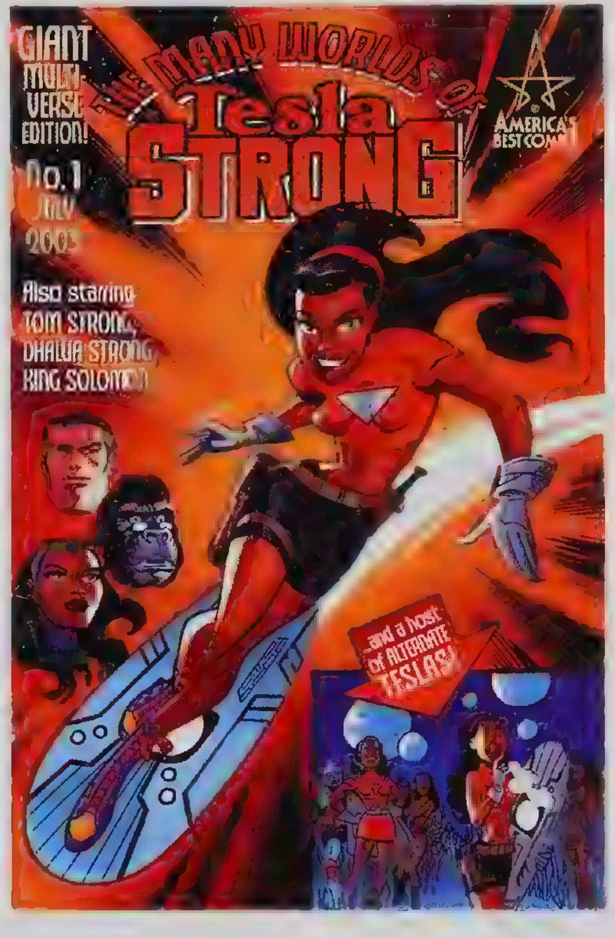
Nonetheless, Moore's publishers understood the prestige his presence conferred, and the relatively free artistic hand he was given benefited publisher, author, collaborators, and readers alike, throughout his time on the titles. The line debuted with the unlikely runaway hit *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman* (with artist Kevin O'Neill), known by the general public for the 2003 live-action movie version which, remarkably, was optioned for film before an issue of the comic ever came out. A kind of *Wild Wild West* by way of *Masterpiece Theatre*, the book is a dark farce in which a gamut of literary characters—from *Dracula*'s Mina Harker to the Invisible Man—interact with each other and with real-life events in a satirical swirl of the history readers think they know and the classics they don't really remember. The book spawned a surprising subgenre of Victorian-era action strips (from Cliffhanger's *Steampunk* to Vertigo's *Barnum!*) and a second series of its own, in addition to the movie.

Though ostensibly unconnected to ABC's other books, Moore and O'Neill's 1890s terminators set the tone for the rest of the line: Moore went back to the very DNA of the American action hero for his models, basing the new characters on pulp adventures and even earlier popular lore, or on equally uncharted (or at least long-neglected) precincts of popular entertainment. The main single-character series were *Tom Strong* (with artist Chris Sprouse) and *Promethea* (with artist J. H. Williams III). Tom Strong is a benevolent warrior-wiseman in the Doc Savage mold from which Superman himself was cast; Promethea, a kind of self-made muse, is a spirit of creativity, with roots in personified patron saints from pagan myth (Athena) to pre–World War II patriotic mascots (Britannia, Columbia).

Also in the first batch of ABC titles was *Top Ten* (with artists Zander Cannon and Gene Ha), a superhero team book with the twist of being a self-described *Hill Street Blues* in spandex; and *Tomorrow Stories*, an anthology of short stories concerning several characters: *Greyshirt* (with artist Rick Veitch), a mysterious detective whose trickily designed stories paid homage to Will Eisner's *Spirit; Cobweb* (with artist Melinda Gebbie), an aristocratic femme fatale drifting through homoerotic fables more reminiscent of a surrealist journal than a comic; *Jack B. Quick, Boy Inventor* (with artist Kevin Nowlan), an unlikely theoretical-physics sitcom centered around a hellish, rural Harry Potter; *The First American* (with artist Jim Baikie), a patriotic-hero spoof recalling the halcyon days of early *MAD* magazine; and *Splash Brannigan* (with artist Hilary Barta), an outlandish burlesque of both the "elemental" strain of superheroes (Human Torch, Iceman, etc.) and the shape-shifting school (Plastic Man, Metamorpho, etc.), in the person of a sentient splotch of ink.

As time went on, *Top Ten* and *Tomorrow Stories* were retired for a variety of miniseries and one-shots, and another book featuring the line's most popular hero, *Tom Strong's Terrific Tales* (2002–2004). That book included ABC's one clunker, *Jonni Future* (written by Steve Moore—no relation to Alan Moore—with artist Arthur Adams), a beautifully drawn but narratively tiresome softcore porn space opera. The specials included a one-shot for Tom Strong's daughter Tesla, *The Many Worlds of Tesla Strong* (written by Peter Hogan, 2003); several-issue stints for Greyshirt (written by Veitch, 2001–2002) and *Top Ten*'s character Smax (2003–2004); and *Terra Obscura* (written by Moore and Hogan with art by Yanick Paquette, 2003), an intriguing B-movie superhero saga featuring the cult favorite characters of the widely forgotten 1940s Nedor line (public-domain properties also still published by—pardon the confusion—AC Comics).

Lovingly executed in a multitude of pastiche styles from across the history of pop culture, the books brim with imagination and charm, both nostalgic and fresh. Moore's fascination with historical permutations of heroic archetypes reaches full flower here. Tom Strong is the product of wonky genetic and social engineering, à la Philip Wylie's *Gladiator*. Raised by a tyrannical Victorian father in a gravity-enhanced chamber to develop unnatural strength in normal settings (while being schooled with equal boot-camp intensity), Strong emerges as a brawny boy science genius when dad's scheme is wiped out by a volcanic eruption in the secluded Caribbean setting he's chosen for it. Adopted by a wise but unstereotypical tropical tribe, Strong develops a heart to match his mind, and travels to his ancestral America to become the benefactor of the utopian Millennium City. The tribe's mythical "goloka root" that slows his age is a handy device for century-spanning adventures that dispense elegantly with the contrived immortality of most action heroes, while allowing Moore and his artists to picture their star in a plethora of period homages and send-ups.


GIANT MULTI-VERSE EDITION!
No.1 JULY 2003
The Many Worlds of Tesla STRONG
AMERICA'S BEST COMICS
Also starring TOM STRONG, DHALUA STRONG, KING SOLOMON
...and a host of ALTERNATE TESLAS!

The Many Worlds of Tesla Strong #1 © 2003 America's Best Comics/DC Comics. (Cover art by Bruce Timm.)

Similarly, *Promethea* portrays a recurring archetype who stretches back to eighteenth century potboilers and forward through later pulps and comics. Researching the character for a pop-literature class, young college student Sophie Bangs discovers that there is actually a lineage of women who have invoked and then channeled Promethea through their own creative activities as writers or artists (Bangs herself will be the next one to do so). The character lives in the Immateria, a kind of heaven for all creatures of the imagination, and is a benevolent creative force sometimes manifesting in the real world. This background allowed for more dazzling stylistic variety and historic sweep, and for spiritual storylines far from the common fisticuffs of standard superheroics. A kind of vernacular holy book, the series ranks among Moore's masterworks.

In its first five years, the ABC line earned just about every award available in the medium (including multiple Eisners from 2000–2003), attracting acclaim and generating controversy. (A Cobweb story reportedly ridiculing the Church of Scientology was spiked by DC; an entire issue of the *League* was reduced to pulp for its reproduction of a Victorian ad for a feminine-hygiene product with "Marvel" in its name, no doubt to the bafflement of DC's main competitor.) Along the way, many of comics' most prestigious artists (from Jerry Ordway to Kyle Baker) had made cameo contributions, whole worlds had been created (Moore is a major practitioner of setting-as-character, from *Greyshirt*'s natural-gas-powered modern metropolis to *Top Ten*'s citywide retirement community for surplus superheroes), and plentiful new possibilities for the medium had been glimpsed.

In 2003, Moore made the bombshell announcement that he would be entering semi-retirement and shutting down the line, making comics history one last time by actually writing an apocalypse for the entire ABC world (the medium's first voluntary closure of a company). Weary of an underappreciated art form's economic grind, but with financial security ironically enhanced by its merchandizing to other media—the royalties from two film adaptations he refused to ever watch (*The League* and *From Hell*)—Moore intended to concentrate on novels, his ongoing ritualistic recording and performance-art work, and occasional comics, at his leisure. Timing this transition for his fiftieth birthday, it was what he needed to top the notorious announcement of his debut as a professional magician for his fortieth.

The sole exception to Moore's retirement from comics is *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, which Moore and artist Kevin O'Neill own, and which Moore continues to write. The new *League* stories, however, are published by Top Shelf (in the United States) and Knockabout Comics (in the UK), not by DC Comics.

Wildstorm also published *Albion*, a 2005–2006 miniseries plotted by Alan Moore, scripted by his daughter Leah Moore and her husband John Reppion, and drawn by Shane Oakley. In this series Moore revived numerous British characters from comics of the 1960s and early 1970s that were published by IPC Media, such as Captain Hurricane, Robot Archie, the Spider, and the Steel Claw. *—AMC & PS*

Ant-Man and the Wasp

Marvel's superhero revolution has been so successful that it is hard to imagine a time when the company was unsure about how to handle them, but in its early years there were a few strips that never quite caught on. One of these was Ant-Man, although, over the years, he has remained in the public eye through a succession of name—and size—changes. Dr. Henry ("Hank") Pym was first introduced in a short Stan Lee/Jack Kirby story called "The Man in the Ant Hill!" (in *Tales to Astonish* #27) in early 1962, barely two months after *Fantastic Four* #1; this makes him Marvel's second superhero. The tale recounts how intrepid (not to say reckless) scientist Hank Pym discovers a serum that can shrink him to the size of an ant; essentially, this plot device was little different from those used in the many mystery stories that the company was churning out at the time. However, later that year (in *Tales to Astonish* #33) Pym returns, this time with a stylish red costume and a "cybernetic" helmet that allows him to communicate with and control ants, as well as amplify his voice when he is shrunken so that humans can hear him. With a supply of shrinking fluids (later capsules) in his belt, he is ready to tackle crime as Ant-Man.

This faintly ludicrous premise inspired a number of enjoyably wacky stories—as long as Lee and Kirby were aboard. However, issues by lesser hands were a pale shadow of the company's top features, such as *Fantastic Four* or *Spider-Man*. From a contemporary perspective, nevertheless, there is much to enjoy in the series' parade of outrageous villains, including Egghead (whose head was, indeed, ovoid), the Porcupine, El Toro, the Scarlet Beetle, the Human Top, and the infamously stupid Living Eraser. *Tales to Astonish* #44 introduced the partner, love interest, and part-time damsel-in-distress Janet Van Dyne, a.k.a. the Wasp. She was gifted with shrinking powers, wings, and stingers by a smitten Pym. In late 1963 the pair were founding members of the Avengers, in whose comic book they would find much of their success over the following decades. One month later, Pym underwent the first of many transformations.

In issue #49 of *Tales to Astonish*, Pym discovered that by adjusting his serum he could grow rather than shrink, and so Giant-Man was born. Several issues later, the strip introduced a group of kids called the Giant-Man and Wasp Fan Club, but the strip was in trouble, and in issue #70 it was replaced by the Sub-Mariner, just as Ant-Man and the Wasp had been replaced in *The Avengers* #15 by the Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver. However, after a year in the wilderness, the pair returned and became *Avengers* regulars throughout the 1960s. But all this shrinking and growing were taking their toll on poor old Pym, who first changed his name to Goliath and then had a mental breakdown, reappearing as the mad, bad, and dangerous-to-know Yellowjacket. Undeterred by her beau's raging schizophrenia, the Wasp promptly married Pym/Yellowjacket; but, even though he soon returned to normal, the seeds of future trouble were sown.

For the rest of that decade, Yellowjacket and the Wasp were occasional stars in the Avengers, while Clint Barton, a.k.a. Hawkeye, "borrowed" Pym's growth serum and became a new, bare-chested Goliath. In the early 1970s, the pair went on an extended "research" leave of absence, although Pym starred in a brief run of *Marvel Feature* (issues #4–#10 in 1972) as Ant-Man, before returning to the group with issue #137. While Pym seemed content to be Yellowjacket, his lab assistant Bill Foster briefly became the size-changing Black Goliath for five issues of his own comic. The 1980s were a less happy time for the couple, with the Wasp becoming ever more prominent in the Avengers while Pym gradually went around the bend (again) in his lab. In a sequence of events starting in *The Avengers* #213, Hank had a nervous breakdown, hit Van Dyne, was court-martialed by the team, framed by Egghead for stealing some nuclear devices, jailed, freed, divorced, retired, un-retired, and finally inducted in to the West Coast Avengers (as depressed scientist-in-residence).

Meanwhile, someone at Marvel noticed that there was currently no one in their line called Ant-Man, and so a new one duly appeared in two issues of *Marvel Premiere* (issues #47 and #48, in 1981). This new incarnation was Scott Lang, who had turned to crime to support his family and had been jailed for three years, during which his wife divorced him. On his release, he found work with Stark Industries but stole one of Pym's old Ant-Man costumes to rescue the one doctor who could save his critically ill daughter (and who had rather inconveniently been kidnapped). Following his first successful outing as Ant-Man, Lang was given the suit permanently by a very understanding Pym and has since gone on to guest appearances in *Avengers, Rom, Iron Man, Silver Surfer,* and *Alias*. After quitting his job with Stark Industries, he was hired by the Fantastic Four to replace Reed Richards when that character temporarily disappeared (in *Fantastic Four* #388). Following Reed's inevitable return, Lang became something of a glorified computer repairman for the team before joining the Heroes for Hire for a couple of years in the late 1990s (and appearing as mentor and rival to his grown-up, Wasp-like daughter Cassie—a.k.a. "Stinger"—in the parallel-future Avengers book *A-Next*). Like the original Ant-Man, Lang's powers are not really significant enough to sustain a solo series, but he makes a decent team player and his insecurity and self-doubt make him an engaging character.

As far as Pym is concerned, the late 1980s saw him begin to rebuild his life and, for a while, he used his abilities (now made inherent after such prolonged use of his various potions and gases) to shrink or enlarge other objects, before gaining the confidence to become a superhero again. In due time, he rejoined the Avengers as Giant-Man, once more changed his name to Goliath, and gradually became reconciled with the Wasp. Post-millennial developments have seen the inevitable third mental breakdown and the reappearance of Yellowjacket. Although this time Yellowjacket initially occupied a separate body, he and Pym were eventually merged together.

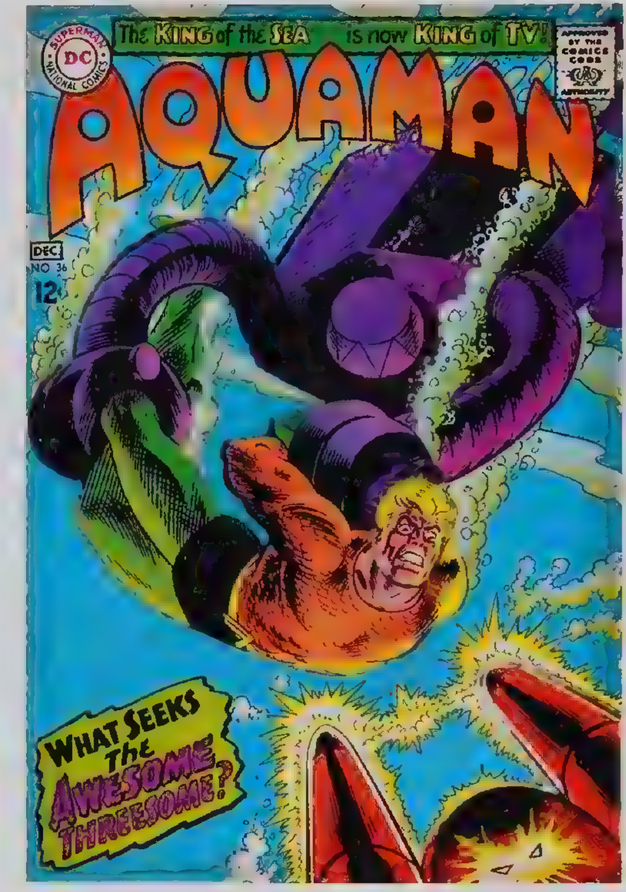
While never a major figure in the comics world, Pym has enjoyed something of a cult following, particularly as Ant-Man, which has resulted in a well-received book collection of his *Tales to Astonish* years (in 2002) and the occasional action figure and statue. His sole brush with the mass media was in the 1999–2000 Fox *Avengers* television cartoon, where he appeared simply as scientist Dr. Hank Pym.

After the seeming death of Janet Van Dyne in Marvel's *Secret Invasion* series (2008), Henry Pym adopted the name of the Wasp as a tribute to her. The new *Avengers Academy* series, which debuted in 2010, is about a school that Pym recently founded to train young superhumans. In 2011, Pym resumed his costumed persona of Giant-Man.

Writer Robert Kirkman and artist Phil Hester created the third Ant-Man, Eric O'Grady, who debuted in *The Irredeemable Ant-Man* #1 (September 2006) and later joined the Secret Avengers. *—DAR*

Aquaman

Although he was not the first aquatic superhero, Aquaman is the only one who has been in print almost continuously since his creation in 1941. Aquaman, also nicknamed King of the Seven Seas, first swam onto the scene in *More Fun* #73, one of several creations of legendary DC Comics editor Mort Weisinger, with art by Paul Norris. The creators covered Aquaman's origin in a mere three panels: His father, an undersea explorer named Tom Curry, discovers the ruins of long-lost Atlantis and sets up home there. From the books and records of that ancient civilization, he teaches his son, Arthur Curry, how to live and breathe underwater (not to mention swimming through the ocean at 100 miles per hour), and how to communicate with and control the many denizens of the deep. Later on, the comic reveals that Aquaman's mother had been an Atlantean herself, truly solidifying Aquaman as a man of the sea. His one true weakness, however, is that he cannot survive for more than one hour without water. But since even the slightest contact with water keeps him alive, the Marine Marvel can also enjoy the life of a crime fighter on land.


SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
The KING of the SEA is now KING of TV!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
AQUAMAN
DEC NO 36
12¢
WHAT SEEKS The AWESOME THREESOME?

Aquaman #36 © 1967 DC Comics. (Cover art by Nick Cardy.)

In 1945, Aquaman moved from *More Fun* to *Adventure Comics,* where he stayed until 1961, one of only five superheroes from comics' Golden Age (1938–1954) to remain in print throughout the 1950s. While he started life battling Nazis, most of his strips in this later period were peopled with petty criminals, or helpless fish in need of rescuing. As superheroes came back into vogue by that decade's end, the strip was revamped and a young companion, plucky boy-hero Aqualad, was introduced. Affectionately dubbed "Tadpole" and "Little Sardine," Aqualad learns the ways of the deep from Aquaman, joining his mentor in many undersea adventures. In 1961, Aquaman starred in four issues of *Showcase,* which led the next year to his own solo comic and an ongoing membership in the Justice League of America.

Throughout the 1960s, Aquaman was a stalwart of DC's superhero lineup—albeit a somewhat middle-aged one. *Showcase* stories had revealed that he was in fact the king of Atlantis, and most of his later strips dealt with threats to the kingdom from other aquatic races, weird beasts, and alien invaders. In short order, he met and wed Mera, a water-dwelling girl from another dimension, and the pair quickly produced Aquababy. Not to be outdone, Aqualad acquired his own love interest, Aquagirl, and became a founding member of the Teen Titans. With solid writing from Bob Haney and elegant art by Nick Cardy, the *Aquaman* comic was always well crafted, but perhaps lacking in excitement. During this period, Aquaman jumped from print into various cartoon shows—first during the 1967–1968 CBS season with *Aquaman* (voiced by Bud Collyer, who also voiced Superman for radio and television) and then, in 1970, on *The Superman/Aquaman Hour. Aquaman* comics published at the end of the 1960s saw a punchier, more ecologically-inclined approach from Steve Skeates and Jim Aparo, but the comic was canceled in 1971, and Aquaman was reduced to regular appearances with the Justice League.

However, a few years later, following the sudden cancellation of the controversial Spectre strip in *Adventure Comics,* Aquaman was rushed back, along with his last creative team, to fill the gap. This led to a short-lived revival of his own comic, which culminated in the unexpected and shocking murder of Aquababy by arch-villain Black Manta. In time, cancellation was followed by backup slots and a starring role in the long-running (1973–1986) *Super Friends* cartoon series.To the present day, DC has managed to keep the character in the public eye in one way or another.

Following the death of their son, Mera and Aquaman parted company, and the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a gradual hardening of the hero's personality, and grittier stories. One (of many) 1980s miniseries introduced a new, camouflaged costume to replace his old, fish-scale-covered, green-and-orange getup. This run led to a regular series in 1991. Its ecological theme proved no more popular than the previous, late 1960s attempt, but a third series in 1994 met with more success. In a reflection of the current popularity of violent anti-heroes, Aquaman now grew his hair long, sported a straggly beard, lost his left hand, and had it replaced by a harpoon! Mera and Aqualad were back on the scene, but Aquaman's main love interest was Dolphin, a previously obscure water-breathing girl, from the pages of *Showcase* some twenty years earlier. At seventy-five issues, this was the title's longest run, and it was followed after a year's break by a fourth series in 2002. It now seems that Aquaman has been forced into exile following a coup, and is reduced to living in freshwater areas, where he has acquired magical powers (and a replacement left hand) from the Lady of the Lake.

In a storyline by writer Kurt Busiek, Aquaman became the mysterious Dweller of the Depths, who mentored a young successor to his role of Aquaman. The original Aquaman was killed, but he was resurrected in the series *Blackest Night* (2009–2010), with his original hand restored. The original Aquaman stars in a new ongoing series that debuted in 2011, written by Geoff Johns and drawn by Ivan Reis.

Aquaman has had a surprisingly strong presence on television in recent years. Played by Alan Ritchson, Aquaman appeared in several episodes of the live action series *Smallville.* A bearded, comically boastful version of Aquaman has made many appearances on the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* A long-running storyline on the HBO series *Entourage* concerned the making of a fictional *Aquaman* movie. And comedian Craig Ferguson impersonates Aquaman in the "Dear Aquaman" segments of *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson* on CBS. *—DAR & PS*

Archie Heroes

Archie Comics is best known for the superheroic feat of continuing to thrive while the rest of the comics industry slumps, outpacing other companies by still selling millions annually, and appearing at point-of-sale areas in supermarkets throughout the United States, while most of its competition is consigned to specialty comic shops. But this imprint, which has prospered from tales of the ageless all-American teen and his madcap pals, has at times also fearlessly pursued the caped-crime-fighter market, heeding the call of the genre's cyclical booms.

Archie Comics began in 1939 as MLJ, one of many pulp magazine publishers that saw gold in those colorful superhero costumes. Though obscure today and minor by any measure, the company scored a surprising number of firsts. For instance, MLJ debuted the original patriotic superhero, the Shield, in 1940, fourteen months before (and with an almost identical origin to) Captain America, who is widely remembered as the first and best of the type.

At the same time, MLJ brought out the Comet, an early and forgotten brainchild of the now-revered Plastic Man creator Jack Cole. The Comet discovers a gas much lighter than hydro gen, and injects it into his veins (don't try this at home, kids), gaining the ability to fly, along with the unfortunate side effect of rays that shoot uncontrollably from his eyes, but are restrained by a special visor (an unlikely "power" lifted verbatim, and much more profitably, by Marvel Comics for X-Men team leader Cyclops, decades later).

Steel Sterling, who in 1940 acquired the strength of that metal by coating himself in a special chemical and leaping naked into a molten vat of the stuff (don't even think about it, kids), was actually comics' first character to be called "The Man of Steel," and MLJ also featured, perhaps, the first death of a superhero and the first "outing" of a secret identity. Such subjects would become preoccupations in the mid-1980s, with DC Comics' infamous fan phone-in contest to decide if the Joker should kill Robin, and in the early 2000s, with Marvel's lengthy storyline on the tabloid revelation of Daredevil's alter ego.

In 1941 the Comet was murdered by vengeful gangsters, becoming likely the first star in superhero history to die—or at least to stay dead. The medium has seen many costumed resurrections, and with the ghostly crusader Mr. Justice, MLJ was one of several companies to feature heroes who *started* dead. (MLJ broke even on the Comet's demise, using the event to inspire his brother to become vigilante superhero, the Hangman.) A different costumed vigilante, the Black Hood, demoted himself to street-clothes detective after a villain unmasked him in 1946, though for the preceding six years this most generic of superheroes had enjoyed a surprising degree of renown, not only headlining comics but starring briefly in his own pulp magazine and radio show.

But even this fame, like that of all the MLJ heroes, was fleeting; the ingratiating Archie was introduced in the back pages of *Pep Comics* (then the Shield and Hangman's domain) in 1941, and by 1945 he was the runaway hit that put all of MLJ's heroes into retreat (even taking over the name of the company in that year). It would be almost two decades before the costumes would come out of storage.

When DC rang in comics' Silver Age (1956–1969) by revising and revamping characters like the Flash and Green Lantern in the mid- to-late 1950s, Archie Comics was the first competitor to follow suit, with a retooled Shield (adapted by Captain America's own creators, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, as *The Double Life of Private Strong*). This comic was soon followed by *The Fly* (whose alter ego rubs a magic ring to gain all the powers of the insect world), in 1959, and *The Jaguar* (whose alter ego rubs a magic belt to gain all the powers of the animal kingdom), in 1961. Marvel Comics had a lot more success stealing DC's thunder, while the "Archie Adventure Series" books bit the dust within a few years, or even a few issues.

Regardless, Archie Comics tried again with the "Mighty Comics Group" line in 1965, hiring, of all people, Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel to script several series in the campy fashion of the day. The Fly was renamed Fly-Man; his counterpart Fly-Girl appeared; the Shield's son showed up in his dad's costume; the Black Hood and the Comet came out of retirement (or, in the Comet's case, death); and the Hangman and another 1940s MLJ hero, the Wizard, were economically repurposed as supervillains. There were occasional walk-ons by many MLJ alums, and the company even licensed an unappetizingly costumed superhero version of the classic pulp avenger the Shadow.

Capitalizing on the hip humor and hyperbole of early 1960s Marvel Comics and the *Batman* television show, while lacking their wit and quality, Archie's "Mighty" titles did have a breathless, show-must-go-on exuberance that gives them a certain crude charm and admirable audacity. If nothing else, they tell a crucial part of comics history, as indicators of how insatiable the market for superheroes once was—though these books in particular were history themselves by 1967.

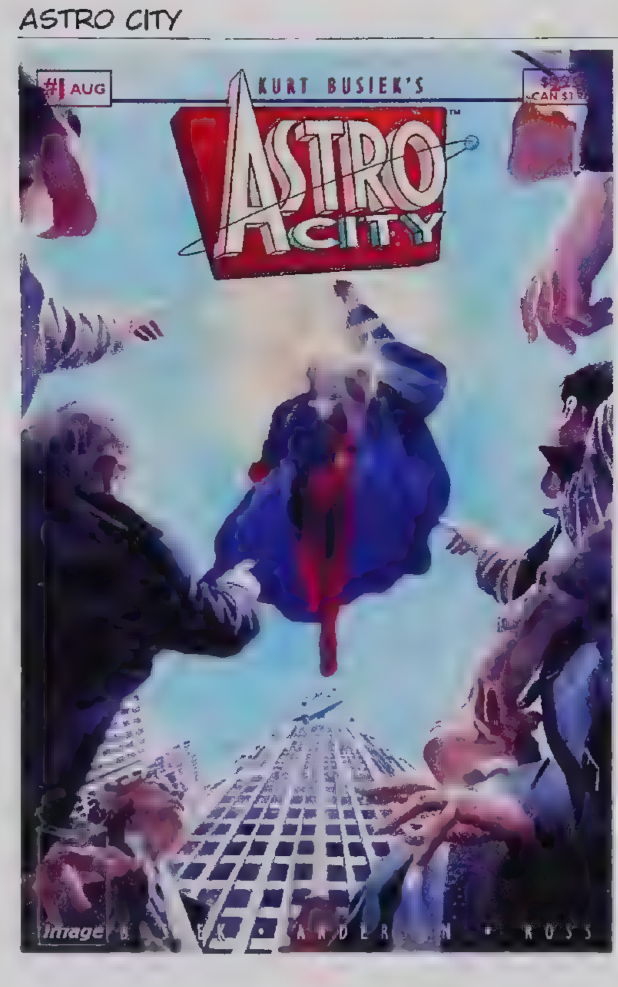
Later, Archie Comics met a mid-1980s superhero boomlet with a fitful revival of its own costumed heroes, which lasted two years, from 1983 to 1985. First through the Red Circle imprint (1983–1984), a banner under which Archie had published respected occult-themed thrillers in the 1970s, and then through a return of the *Archie Adventure Series* (1984–1985), the company revived the Fly (and his original name), the Comet, both versions of the Shield, and the Mighty Crusaders (a catchall superteam of the Archie heroes first seen in the Mighty Comics days). Some of comics history's biggest names passed through the short-lived line (including Jack Kirby and Jim Steranko, who did covers, and Carmine Infantino, who did interior art on *The Comet*), but the comics' style seems to have surpassed their substance, and they rank among the medium's least remembered endeavors.

In the early 1990s, comics companies were eager to feed another fleeting superhero craze, fueled by a speculation boom among collectors. Feeling new to many readers while providing publishers with at least some kind of commercial pedigree, the Archie heroes briefly came to the rescue again, being licensed by DC Comics for the stand-alone "!mpact" line (1991–1993). The familiar names were wheeled out with slightly unfamiliar (but none too innovative) origins and alter egos, including a Jaguar retooled to be a woman were-cat (like Marvel's Tigra), a Black Hood book in which the mystical headgear is more the star than its wearers (like Dark Horse's *The Mask*), a Comet powered by the explosion of a damaged radio antenna (?), several confusing generations of Shields, and so forth. The books generally suffered from the quantity-over-quality mindset that prevailed at the time, and with only diehard comics fans to sustain them, died off as the casual mass audience disappeared. (Ironically, the rights to these characters hadn't been forthcoming a few years before, when a rising writer named Alan Moore wanted them for a little DC proposal that came to be called *Watchmen*.)

In 2008 DC acquired the Archie superheroes and integrated the Mighty Crusaders into the DC universe, including the Comet, Fly-Girl, Inferno, the Shield, and a new character, War Eagle. —*AMC*

Astro City

Astro City is the preeminent city in America, and the hub of superpowered activities on Earth. But how do its residents view their superheroic protectors and the villains they oppose, as well as assorted aliens, monsters, and other menaces? And how do the heroes themselves feel about their lives when they aren't fighting crime? These themes are explored in *Astro City,* a comic book series created by writer Kurt Busiek in August 1995 for Image Comics imprint WildStorm (and originally titled *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*). Busiek worked with interior artist Brent Anderson and cover painter Alex Ross to create a world that was the opposite in theory from the "realistic" comics of the 1990s. Instead of examining what superheroes would be like in the real world, he posed the question, "What would the world be like if superheroes were commonplace?"



Astro City #1 © 1995 Juke Box Productions. (Cover art by Alex Ross.)

Astro City has many archetypal heroes, but their private lives—and interaction with the world around them—is richer than in many comic book series. The Superman-like Samaritan flies from rescue to rescue, never able to enjoy the sensation of flight except in his dreams. Winged Victory prioritizes those she will aid: women first, men second. The superpowered Astra, ten-year-old daughter and member of The First Family, wants to learn to play hopscotch and go to school with normal kids. Jack-in-the-Box uses toys to fight crime, but worries about his own upcoming child. Dark avenger the Confessor hides a startling secret from everyone, including his teen sidekick, Altar Boy. An ex-villain named Steeljack gets out of prison and tries to resume a normal life, despite his silver skin. A cartoon anthropomorphic lion brought to life experiences the ups and downs of Hollywood stardom.

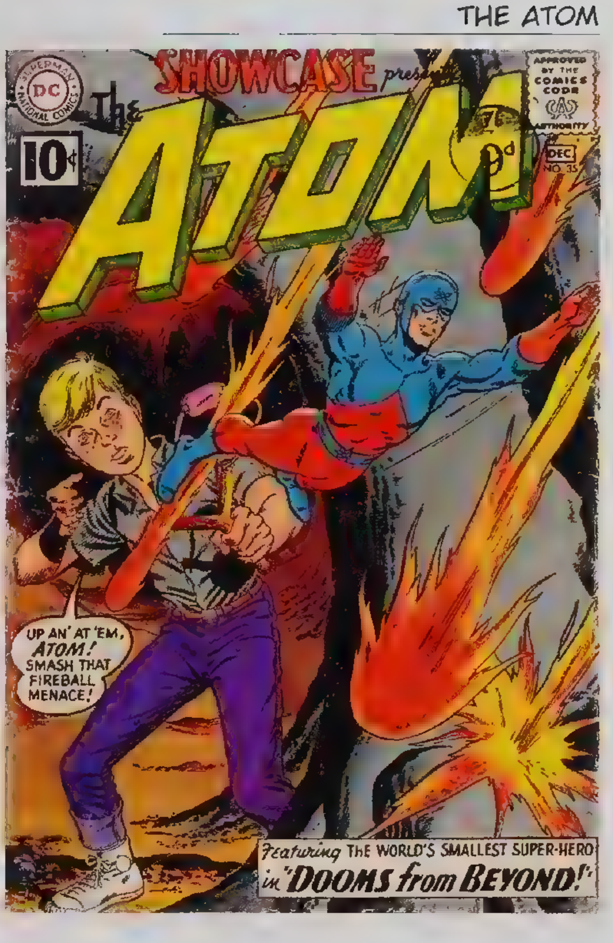
Not only the heroes are under the spotlight in *Astro City*. As he did in his landmark series *Marvels*—in which he examined the history of Marvel Comics' heroes through the eyes of a newspaperman—Busiek often uses ordinary people and their perceptions to tell about the world of Astro City. Whether it is a newspaper reporter who cannot prove the astonishing adventure he witnessed with Silver Agent and the Honor Guard, a thief who discovers Jack-in-the-Box's identity and imagines what the knowledge could do for him, a second-generation immigrant girl who finds the monster-filled Shadow Hill neighborhood more comforting than the gleaming city, or a father concerned about moving his family to Astro City because of the super-violence, the ordinary citizens of this metropolis make as much of an impact in *Astro City* stories as do the heroes.

The *Astro City* series also features many homages to past comic-book creators. Street, store, and building names are rife with comic book connections. Binderbeck Plaza, the heart of Astro City, is named after the creators of Captain Marvel, Otto Binder and C. C. Beck, while Iger Square, Grandenetti Avenue, and Feldstein's Bar & Grill refer to artists Jerry Iger and Jerry Grandenetti, and EC Comics/*MAD* magazine editor Al Feldstein.

Since its inception, *Astro City* has had an irregular publishing schedule, but given its anthology format, the wait for issues is not as problematic as for serialized storylines. Numerous hardcover collections and trade paperbacks of *Astro City* are available, and the series (under various names, including the five-issue *Astro City: Local Heroes* miniseries in 2003–2004) was recently published through DC Comics' WildStorm/Homage imprint. A short-lived series of *Astro City* action figures was also released in 1999 by Toy Vault, and Bowen Designs released a Samaritan statue in April 1999. In 2010, Working Title Films began developing an *Astro City* live-action movie, for which Busiek wrote a script treatment and acts as executive producer. —*AM*

The Atom

There has always been a place in comics for the little guy, and few came any smaller than


SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
10¢
SHOWCASE presents
The ATOM
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
DEC NO. 35
UP AN' AT 'EM, ATOM! SMASH THAT FIREBALL MENACE!
Featuring THE WORLD'S SMALLEST SUPER-HERO
in 'DOOMS from BEYOND!'

Showcase #35 © 1961 DC Comics. (Cover art by Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson.)

DC's Atom—or rather Atoms! The first Atom premiered in *All-American Comics* #19, in late 1940, and very soon afterward began appearing as a member of the Justice Society in *All Star Comics*. The young Al Pratt, a student at Calvin College, is tired of being teased about his diminutive stature, and to impress his sweetheart Mary James, he vows to transform his body into something more presentable. Through intensive training with former boxing champ Joe Morgan, he is soon immensely powerful. After donning a brown-and-yellow weightlifting costume (complete with straps and buckles), with a blue cowl and cape, the Atom starts a one-man crusade against crime and injustice.

Without doubt, the Atom was one of the most uncomplicated characters of the Golden Age of comics (1938–1954); he had no superpowers, secret hideouts, sidekick, weaponry, or gimmicks. What the strip had, particularly when drawn by the gritty Joe Gallagher, was a sort of down-to-earth honesty, as the hero took on a variety of hoodlums and gangsters in a succession of short, punchy yarns. Considering how basic the feature's premise was, it is surprising that the Atom was to prove so enduring, but he outlasted many of his more flamboyant colleagues. He starred in more than fifty issues of *All-American Comics* and, when he was ignominiously displaced from that title he moved right on over to *Flash Comics* for a few more years' worth of strips. In *All Star Comics* he was to prove one of the most enduring members of the Justice Society of America, starring in almost every story until the comic's demise in 1951. By this time, he had undergone a radical revamp in which he had somehow acquired "atomic strength" and sported a new costume, topped off with a fin on his head.

Al Pratt's Atom was next seen, along with the rest of the Justice Society, a decade later in the 1960s, but only as an occasional participant in their adventures, perhaps because another Atom had been created in his absence. Following the success of the Flash and Green Lantern, DC editor Julius Schwartz was looking for another Golden Age character to revamp when artist Gil Kane brought in some new designs for the Atom. Kane was inspired by Quality Comics' Doll Man, and his Atom update was similarly a hero who could shrink himself down to an almost microscopic size. Over three issues of *Showcase* in 1961 and 1962, Schwartz, Kane, and writer Gardner Fox introduced physics professor Ray Palmer, whose experiments with fragments of a white dwarf star enable him to shrink almost at will. After discovering that his best size is six inches, Palmer dons the requisite red-and-blue superhero costume and embarks on a clandestine career as a crime fighter.

Schwartz and Fox had solid backgrounds in science fiction, and consequently the Atom's adventures were frequently based on some sort of scientific conundrum or another, be it a natural disaster, or a trip back in time to meet Jules Verne or Edgar Allen Poe. When shrunk, the Atom had increased physical strength but was still something of a lightweight compared to heavy-hitters such as Superman or Wonder Woman, and so his villains, like Jason Woodroe, the Plant Master, or the stripy-costumed Chronos, also tended

3550815
Dolton Public Library District

to be second rate. In civilian life, Ray Palmer was courting the pretty lawyer Jean Loring, but the pair acted more like a middle-aged couple than young lovers, and the feature as a whole, though beautifully illustrated, was ultimately rather dry. After thirty-eight issues of his own title (including two guest appearances from his Golden Age counterpart) and six more co-headlining with Hawkman, the Atom was relegated to a backup slot in *Action Comics.*

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Atom (by now married to Loring) was a regular member of the Justice League of America, and that seemed to be enough for most fans, few of whom were clamoring for a new Atom comic. However, Gil Kane still fondly remembered his creation and, together with writer Jan Strnad, brought out a miniseries, *Sword of the Atom,* in 1983. After finding out that his wife was having an affair, Palmer flew out to the Amazon, where he discovered a tribe of diminutive, yellow-skinned barbarians, which he promptly joined. This new direction, which continued in a series of specials throughout the 1980s, owed more to Conan the Barbarian than a regular superhero book and was surprisingly well written. However, a subsequent 1988 regular series was a more pedestrian retread of the 1960s version and interest once more died out.

The 1990s brought an appearance in the *Zero Hour* miniseries, and a rather unexpected transformation: the now resolutely middle-aged Palmer was bizarrely changed into a seventeen-year-old. The teenage Palmer did the only logical thing a teenage superhero could do: He joined DC's all-purpose kid group, the Teen Titans. In 1997 the Justice League was relaunched with its original 1960s lineup, including, of course, the Atom, with his temporary youthful transformation apparently forgotten by everyone, including the comic's creators.

Outside the comics, the Ray Palmer version of the Atom appeared in the animated television series *Justice League Unlimited.* A young Asian-American professor, Ryan Choi, became the new Atom in *DCU: Brave New World* (2006), and subsequently starred in his own comics series. He also appeared in several episodes of the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* However, Choi was killed off in the series *Brightest Day* (2010–2011). *—DAR*

The Authority

"We are the Authority. Behave." So admonished Jenny Sparks, the leader of the superpowered group known as the Authority, after the group had substantially altered the political and physical aspects of an alternate Earth. In those words, she hinted at the duality at work in the comic book series *The Authority,* published by WildStorm Comics. She was telling the people of Earth that the Authority would force them to behave, although the Authority itself did not behave. Winning the day at any cost, the Authority protected humankind while making unchecked decisions about its future.

Many members of the Authority had previously been members of Stormwatch, a United Nations–sponsored superhero team;, but when that team dissolved (and the *Stormwatch* series was canceled in 1998), a new group was formed. The Authority is headquartered aboard the Carrier, an immense ship that can travel between dimensions on the edge of "the Bleed," but which likes to stick close to Earth. The Carrier can open "doors," allowing the team to teleport almost anywhere in the known universe.

Utilizing her vast experience and wielding electrical powers, Sparks was the one-hundred-year-old leader of the team, until her death at midnight on December 31, 1999. She was then replaced by Jenny Quantum, a fast-growing, precocious infant who was adopted by Apollo and Midnighter, a pair of gay heroes in a committed relationship.

Apollo's powers are akin to Superman's. He can fly at tremendous speed, has enhanced strength and heat vision, can survive in space, and is powered by absorbing sunlight. Midnighter is as dark as Apollo is light. Essentially Batman-like, Midnighter is a scrappy fighter dressed in black leather who is capable of analyzing fights in a way that allows him to win most of the time.

The Engineer is Angela Spica, a woman whose blood is actually mechanical, allowing her to control machinery and morph her body's protective covering to include weaponry (she is the second Engineer). The other multi-generational hero in the group is the Doctor. Latest in a long line of shamanistic magicians, the Doctor can converse with all the Doctors before him (of which Albert Einstein and Jesus Christ are two), and can magically transmute matter into living material, such as trees or flowers.

Jack Hawksmoor and Swift make up the rest of the team. Hawksmoor can channel the spirit of cities, allowing himself to merge with concrete streets and steel buildings, and to utilize their strength. The winged Swift (Shen Li-Min) is a huntress, viciously attacking from the air. Over the course of their adventures, the team faces an array of villains, including evil Asian clone-maker Kaizen Gamorra, British soldiers from an alternate Earth known as Sliding Albion, a group of characters resembling Marvel Comics' Avengers (if they were rapists and murderers), and more.

The first twelve issues of *The Authority* (May 1999–April 2000) were written by Warren Ellis and drawn by Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary. They quickly established that they were telling grand tales on a big canvas; the first four-part storyline had Moscow wiped out by hundreds of superpowered clones, then London and Los Angeles attacked as well. A second four-part story saw the Earth being invaded from an alternate dimension, while the third four-parter revealed that Earth was actually created by an alien being that now wanted to reclaim it. In essence, the Authority had to take on and defeat "God.".

Under Ellis, Hitch, and Neary, *The Authority* became both a sales success and a critical success, but the team left the series en masse with issue #12 in April 2000. Coming onboard was writer Mark Millar, aided by artist Frank Quitely (and other guest artists as needed). *The Authority* soon took a nastier turn; instead of grand huge storylines and heroic actions, the Authority were now merciless and political, facing less cosmic evils, and determined to change the world as they saw fit. Millar's dialogue was coarser as well, and his stories tended toward lots of violence, mayhem, rape, and taboo-breaking. Millar even managed to offend fans of one of the comics world's patron saints, super-artist Jack Kirby; in one storyline, Millar's Kirby-like Jacob Krigstein character is the villain. Another storyline completely replaced the Authority with new, similar characters, who were even more debased than their predecessors. The real Authority, thankfully, returned by the end of that story arc.

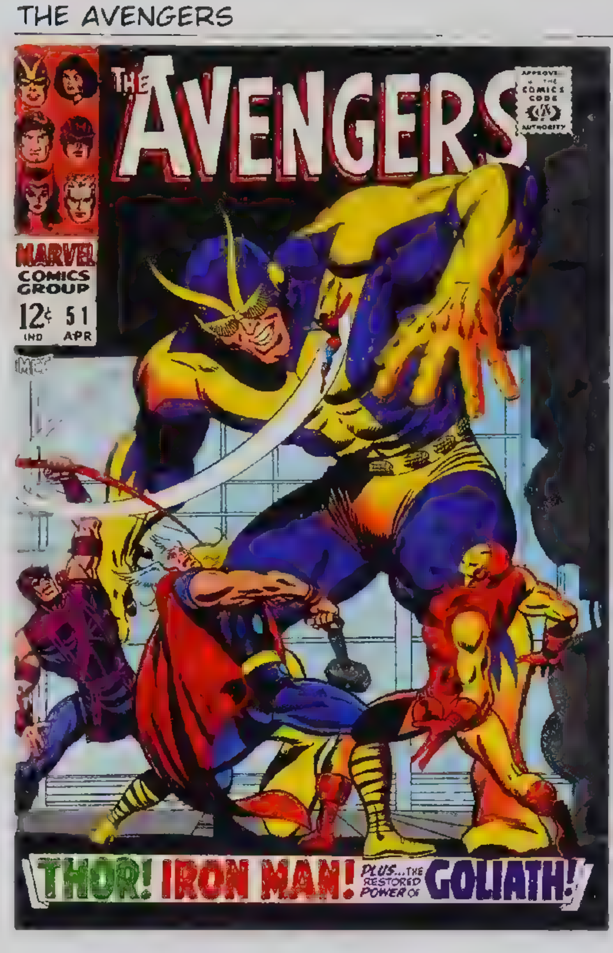
By early 2001, Quitely quit the book—multiple issues had required fill-in artists already—and Art Adams stepped aboard, but *The Authority* was mired in controversy (although sales stayed high). When news was leaked that pages from *The Authority* were being censored after the September 11 attacks—removed or changed were political scenes, extreme gore, and over-the-top debasement—the series' already shaky publishing schedule became disrupted further. A completed forty-eight-page *The Authority: Widescreen* special was indefinitely postponed due to some scenes rife with devastation in New York City.

Millar's run on *The Authority* finally ended with an extremely delayed issue #29 (July 2002)—an issue that featured a comics industry first: a gay wedding. And then, with the exception of some one-shots and specials, the series disappeared. Despite the uncertainty about the series' future, corporate synergy did allow for a set of four *Authority* action figures to be released by DC Direct in August 2002.

In July 2003, WildStorm and DC revived *The Authority* as an ongoing monthly series, under the new creative team of writer Robbie Morrison and artists Dwayne Turner and Sal Regla. The creative team of writer Ed Brubaker and artist Dustin Nguyen collaborated on a new limited series, *The Authority: Revolution,* which began in 2004. Writer Grant Morrison and artist Gene Ha teamed on *The Authority Volume 4*, starting in 2006, followed by Volume 5 in 2008, originally written by the team of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning. —*AM*

The Avengers

In 1963 Marvel Comics was riding an unprecedented wave of sustained success with series such as *The Fantastic Four, The Amazing Spider-*


THE AVENGERS
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢ 51 IND APR
THOR! IRON MAN! PLUS...THE RESTORED POWER OF GOLIATH!

The Avengers #51 © 1968 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by John Buscema.)

Man, and *The Uncanny X-Men,* two of which featured superhero teams. But rival publisher DC Comics (coyly referred to by Marvel writer/editor Stan Lee as "the Distinguished Competition") had already struck pay dirt three years earlier with *Justice League of America,* which presented the company's best-selling heroes operating together as a crime-fighting team. Marvel's initial response to the Justice League of America (JLA) had been 1961's *The Fantastic Four,* which consisted of heroes created from whole cloth (with the exception of a second-generation Human Torch), because Marvel had no preexisting heroes then capable of competing with the likes of DC's Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, the Flash, and Green Lantern. A mere two years later, the publishing landscape had changed considerably in Marvel's favor, enabling Lee and artist Jack Kirby to assemble enough successful Marvel headliners to form a supergroup title in the JLA mold with *The Avengers* (whose first issue bore a September 1963 cover date).

The Avengers, however, was anything but a carbon copy of *Justice League of America,* whose members exhibited a stilted uniformity, at times seeming almost interchangeable. Marvel's new team not only showed real diversity, but also owed its existence largely to the machinations of a villain. Loki, the Norse god of evil, maneuvers his half-brother, the thunder god Thor (from the pages of *Journey into Mystery*), into a battle against the Hulk (whose first six-issue *Incredible Hulk* series had concluded with the March 1963 issue). This fracas also attracts the attention of Iron Man (who debuted in March 1963's *Tales of Suspense* #39), Ant-Man, and his crime-fighting partner and paramour, the Wasp (both of whom maintained an address in *Tales to Astonish*). Although this *ad hoc* quartet at first believes the Hulk to be the villain responsible for an act of railway sabotage, Loki quickly emerges as the real culprit, and suffers a decisive defeat. Before the heroes disperse to their respective titles, Ant-Man suggests that they make their association a permanent one, and the Avengers (a name suggested by the Wasp) is born. Even the notably antisocial Hulk agrees to become part of this new crime-fighting quintet, hoping that by keeping such heroic company he will discourage the military from continually hounding him.

In the mastheads of many Avengers stories of the 1970s, the group's origin and subsequent history are aptly encapsulated: "And there came a day unlike any other, when Earth's mightiest heroes and heroines found themselves united against a common threat! On that day, the Avengers were born—to fight the foes no single super hero could withstand! Through the years, their roster has prospered, changing many times, but their glory has never been denied! Heed the call, then—for now, the Avengers Assemble!" Indeed, the aforementioned roster changes begin almost immediately, with the departure of the Hulk (*The Avengers* #2, 1963), and the induction of Captain America after his recovery from the block of ice in which he had been frozen since the end of the World War II (issue #4, 1964). Captain America (whose 1950s incarnation is conveniently ignored) suffers tremendous angst because of his displacement in time and agonizes over the wartime death of his kid sidekick Bucky Barnes; this poignant characterization, and the contrast between Cap's steadfast patriotism and the hot-headedness of some of his younger teammates, swiftly become two of the group's essential dramatic foci—as does the return of the Nazi Baron Zemo, Captain America's arch-foe, and his Masters of Evil, a collection of superpowered opponents already familiar to the other Avengers.

With issue #16 (1965), the original Avengers roster is replaced entirely by newcomers (though overseen by Captain America). "One great thing about the Avengers team," Lee recalled, "is the fact that we could always change the lineup of heroes. Over the years, we've probably had every one of our heroes, and villains too, appearing in *The Avengers* from time to time. As you might imagine, my biggest problem was finding things for them to avenge, month after month."

The Avengers distinguished itself from *Justice League of America* in another important respect: It questioned the idea of heroism itself. While the JLA members were all unambiguous good guys—so much so that they were virtually indistinguishable from one another, except by their costumes—more than a few Avengers started their careers on the wrong side of the thin spandex line that separates hero from villain. When Thor, Giant-Man (the former Ant-Man, who would later change his name again to Goliath), and the Wasp simultaneously leave the team, Captain America finds himself heading a new squad of Avengers: Hawkeye, an accomplished archer in the mold of DC's Green Arrow; Quicksilver, a mutant speedster reminiscent of DC's Flash; and the Scarlet Witch (Quicksilver's sister), a young woman with the power to alter probabilities using an inborn "hex power," thus making seemingly impossible things occur when necessary.

The recruitment of these characters was a daring editorial choice, and would have been unheard of in a staid organization like the Justice League. Hawkeye, after all, had formerly been a super-criminal, a part of Iron Man's rogues' gallery (*Tales of Suspense* #57, 1964); Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch had been (reluctant) members of the self-described Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, a group headed by their father Magneto (*X-Men* vol. 1 #4, 1964). This development helped foster a sense that anything was possible in the burgeoning Marvel universe—the feeling that all human beings possess capacities for both good and evil—and that no one is beyond redemption. This notion is reinforced years later when Wonder Man (introduced as a villain in *The Avengers* #9) returns from the dead as a hero and takes his place in the Avengers' ranks (*The Avengers* #151, 1976). Adding further realism and ambiguity to the mix is the fact that not every superhero desires Avengers membership; when the team extends an invitation to Spider-Man (*The Avengers* #11, 1964), he declines it. Reflecting the rise of feminism in the 1970s, the Wasp would return to the group, eventually becoming a competent Avengers leader and putting to rest her early 1960s airhead persona.

From its inception *The Avengers* was a hit, and the series' initial success doubtless owes much to the power-packed, *sui generis* renderings of Kirby, who had not only co-created Captain America with writer Joe Simon in 1941, but had also collaborated with Lee on such Marvel mainstay titles as *The Fantastic Four, The Incredible Hulk,* and *Journey into Mystery* (featuring Thor). Kirby illustrated *The Avengers* throughout its first year. With issue #9 (September 1964), Iron Man artist Don Heck (from *Tales of Suspense*) ably took over the penciling reins (though Kirby filled in as penciler on issues #14–#16, and did the page layouts for other second-year *Avengers* issues), while Lee continued with the writing chores until he handed the series off to Roy Thomas (issue #35, December 1966). Over the next several years, Thomas worked with such notable Marvel artists as the aforementioned Heck, John Buscema, George Tuska, Gene Colan, Barry Smith, Sal Buscema, Frank Giacoia, Rich Buckler, and Neal Adams, whose brief run on the title in 1971 (issues #93–#96), during the war between the galactic empires of the Skrulls and the Kree (alien races created by Lee and Kirby and first seen in *The Fantastic Four*), is widely regarded as among the finest Avengers work ever done.

Under Thomas' direction (with writing assists from noted fantasist Harlan Ellison in issues #88 [1971] and #101 [1972]), Avengers story arcs became increasingly complex and character-oriented, flowering into a superpowered melodrama of operatic proportions. Among the many notable characters introduced during Thomas' tenure are such team members as the Vision (an emotionally tortured android with optic-blast powers and the ability to make himself intangible), and such villains as the Grim Reaper (the vengeance-crazed brother of Wonder Man), and Ultron (a world-conquering robot who sought to destroy his creator, Henry Pym, the former Ant-Man). Thomas left the series after issue #104 (1972), to be succeeded by Steve Englehart (author of a seminal time-travel arc involving the villain Kang the Conqueror and his time-displaced doppelgangers Rama-Tut and Immortus), Gerry Conway, Jim Shooter (Conway's and Shooter's Avengers runs are also distinguished by the stunning and highly detailed artwork of George Pérez), Steve Gerber, Tom DeFalco (a future Marvel editor-in-chief), David Michelinie, Mark Gruenwald, Steven Grant, Roger Stern, Bill Mantlo, and John Byrne.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Avengers' membership roles would turnover completely several times while growing exponentially (despite orders from Marvel's fictitious federal government that the group be downsized dramatically in 1979), encompassing such major and minor Marvel heroes as the Beast (from *X-Men*), the Black Panther, Starfox, Hellcat (Patsy Walker), Mantis (Englehart's "Celestial Madonna," whose destiny was to give birth to the most powerful being in the universe), the Black Knight, the She-Hulk, the Sub-Mariner, Tigra, the Black Widow, and even the nineteenth-century Western hero known as the Two-Gun Kid. This relentless expansion isn't surprising, however, given the special government security-clearance status and the weekly thousand-dollar salary (courtesy of Iron Man's Stark International munitions firm) afforded to members by the late 1970s. By the 1990s all the original members of the Fantastic Four—and even the chronic non-joiner, Spider-Man—had become either reserve or inactive Avengers.

By the mid-1980s, the New York–based team had grown to such unwieldy proportions—despite the inactive status of most members—that a second squad was formed in Los Angeles, under the initial leadership of Hawkeye (1984's *West Coast Avengers* limited series, and the ongoing *West Coast Avengers* [later *Avengers West Coast*] monthly series, which ran from 1985 to 1994). In 1989 a self-styled "wannabe" team known as the Great Lakes Avengers—consisting of oddball, previously unknown fourth-stringers such as Mr. Immortal, Dinah Soar, Big Bertha, Flat Man, and Doorman—came into being (*West Coast Avengers* #46), but never achieved official standing with either of the bicoastal teams.

In late 1995 Marvel released *Last Avengers,* a two-issue series (written by Peter David and drawn by Ariel Olivetti) that put an end to many decades-long continuity arcs, and boasts a high Avengers body count, killing off Captain America, Thor, Hercules, the Vision, the Scarlet Witch, and others. But this was far from the end of the line for the Avengers, who resurfaced in the latest volume of their ongoing saga in February 1998 (*The Avengers* vol. 3). From that point fan-favorite writer and Silver Age (1956–1969) scholar Kurt Busiek (who made his reputation penning 1994's superb, Alex Ross–illustrated *Marvels* miniseries) chronicled most of the team's adventures in its main title for four years, collaborating with artists such as George Pérez, Carlos Pacheco, Jerry Ordway, Stuart Immonen, Norm Breyfogle, Richard Howell, Mark Bagley, John Romita Jr., Steve Epting, Alan Davis, Manuel Garcia, Brent Anderson, Ivan Reis, Kieron Dwyer, Patrick Zircher, and Yanick Paquette before leaving the series in the hands of writer Geoff Johns in October 2002 with *Avengers* vol. 3 #57 (writer Chuck Austen took over in vol. 3 #77, March 2004). The 1990s was also replete with *Avengers* miniseries and other ancillary titles executed by various creative teams, including the hugely popular, time-spanning *Avengers Forever* (1999). In 2002, writer Mark Millar and artist Bryan Hitch collaborated on an alternately grim and satirical reinvention of the series for Marvel's "Ultimate" line, suitably retitled *The Ultimates,* which immediately became one of comics' best-selling and most critically acclaimed series. Also in the new millennium, Busiek and Pérez teamed up to create the long-awaited *JLA/Avengers* intercompany crossover miniseries (2003), which after two decades of false starts finally brings the Avengers together with the DC Comics superteam that inspired it in the first place.

During Marvel's "Civil War" there were two rival teams of Avengers. Iron Man organized the official team, the Mighty Avengers, who supported and enforced the new Superhuman Registration Act. In contrast, the New Avengers were an underground team of heroes who opposed the Superhuman Registration Act, and included Luke Cage, Spider-Man, and Wolverine as members. Later, Norman Osborn, the original Green Goblin, became a high government official and organized his own "Dark Avengers," including disguised supervillains. After Osborn fell from power, there was again one Avengers team, including the new Captain America (Bucky Barnes), Hawkeye, Iron Man, Spider-Man, Spider-Woman, Thor, and Wolverine.

A young team of superheroes banded together in the new *Young Avengers* series that debuted in 2005. *Avengers Academy,* which debuted in 2010, is about the Avengers' new school for training young superhumans. *Secret Avengers,* which also launched in 2010, features an additional team of Avengers—founded by Steve Rogers, the original Captain America—to go on covert missions.

Marvel Studios produced *The Avengers* live-action movie (2012). It is directed and co-written by Joss Whedon, the creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* and stars Robert Downey, Jr., as Iron Man, Chris Evans as Captain America, Chris Hemsworth as Thor, Mark Ruffalo as Bruce Banner, Scarlett Johansson as the Black Widow, Jeremy Renner as Hawkeye, and Samuel L. Jackson as SHIELD director Nick Fury. A new animated television series *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes,* premiered in 2010. *—MAM & PS*

The Badger

It can be argued that only those with very extreme personalities would don masks and tights to wage war on crime. Although neurotic superheroes like Spider-Man, intermittent multiple-personality sufferers such as the Hulk, or borderline psychopaths like the Punisher aren't unique in comics, superheroes whose costumed personae arise solely from a psychiatric disorder are rare indeed. But the costumed martial-arts expert known as the Badger is one such hero.

The creation of writer Mike Baron (co-creator of Nexus with artist Steve Rude), the Badger debuted in 1983 in *Badger* vol. 1 #1 (Capital Comics). "The Badger is Norbert Sykes," reads the series' splash-page origin boilerplate, "a Vietnam veteran suffering from an extremely rare multiple personality disorder: seven great personalities in one. The personality most frequently inhabited by Norbert, indeed almost exclusively preferred, is the Badger, a self-styled crime fighter who rides the highways and byways of America, meting out bloody justice to jaywalkers, ticket scalpers, [and] indifferent teenaged fast food clerks—in fact, any damn body he feels like because he's CRAZY!"

The seeds of the Badger's madness were sown during Sykes' childhood, during which he was repeatedly abused by his psychopathic stepfather, Larry. As a young man, the emotionally fragile Sykes served in Vietnam, where his months-long captivity at the hands of the Viet Cong brings him a vision of God as a badger named Myrtle, who grants him the ability to talk to animals, Dr. Doolittle-style. Traumatized, Sykes begins manifesting multiple personalities.

Sykes' seventh personality—that of the martial-arts savvy, self-styled crime fighter who calls himself the Badger—apparently emerges only after Sykes returns to the United States. Arrested for beating up some street punks, the Badger is committed to an insane asylum, where he meets fellow inmate Hammaglystwythkbrngxxaxolotl (also known as Hamilton J. Thorndyke, or simply "Ham" for short), a fifth-century Welsh druid with the power to control the weather, among other arcane skills. Ham shows the Badger how to "fake sanity" long enough to secure his release; in fairly short order, both men are discharged from the institution and take up residence in Ham's forbidding castle, located just south of south of Barneveld, Wisconsin, and purchased with the huge fortune Ham has amassed over the centuries. The Badger becomes Ham's employee, performing numerous odd jobs using the "dozens of obscure, esoteric, arcane, not to mention abstruse, martial arts" he has mastered.

Although the premiere issue of *Badger* (1983) boasted the cleanly delineated art of Steve Rude, Capital Comics (which went on to become on of the largest direct-market comics distributors of the 1980s and 1990s) couldn't make a go of the series. Luckily, First Comics, a larger independent publisher co-founded by Mike Gold, gave the series a new home beginning with issue #5 (1984). *Badger* continued at First until its seventieth issue (1991), when the company folded. Baron wrote the series for its entire run, and his uniquely hilarious (and sometimes poignant) scripts displayed his self-declared enthusiasm both for kung fu adventure and the antics of Carl Barks' Uncle Scrooge McDuck. The Badger made guest appearances in *Nexus* vol. 1 #45–#50 (First Comics, 1988) and starred in a four-issue miniseries titled *Badger Goes Berserk* (First Comics, 1989), as well as in a new "first issue" (1991's *Badger* vol. 2 #1), which retold the character's origin. The Badger also headlined a large-format graphic novel titled *Hexbreaker* (First Comics, 1988).

In addition to Ham, the Badger developed a fascinating, unique, and far-ranging supporting cast over the years, including such allies as Mavis Davis, a female martial artist (and fellow talker-to-the-animals), who becomes the Badger's wife; Daisy Fields, Norbert Sykes' personal psychotherapist and Ham's secretary; Jim Wonktendonk, another Nam veteran; Connie Ammerperson, an African American lesbian cab driver and feminist activist; Fuzzbuster, an owl who helps the Badger avoid speeding tickets; the Yak and the Yeti, a pair of large, ancient, hairy, and often foul-tempered creatures straight out of Tibetan myth; the Wombat, an Australian Vietnam veteran (as crazy and costumed as the Badger), who is the self-styled protector of all animals; Riley Thorpe, the originator of a martial-arts system called Jabberwocky ("some say it's my jabber, some say it's my walk") and one of the Badger's closest associates; and Lamont, a figure-skating buffalo who likes to hoof-race and is self-conscious about his hairstyle.

Numbering among the Badger's many bizarre nemeses are Hodag, a former Green Beret turned neo-Nazi kook (Sykes is no fan of Nazis); Lord Weterlackus (alias Slotman), a powerful demon lord who draws strength from blood sacrifices; the Roach Wrangler, a former exterminator capable of raising insect armies; Dr. Buick Riviera, an insane, demon-powered, martial artist/physician who uses snakes and other animals as weapons in hand-to-hand combat; Count Kohler, who can turn ordinary humans into demons; Ron Dorgan, a martial artist capable of delivering a "death touch"; and Lannier Lutefisk, a Badger impersonator who actually takes Sykes' place for a whole issue (*Badger* vol. 1 #65).

When First Comics disappeared, so did the Badger. Then the headcase hero eventually resurfaced at Dark Horse Comics with a pair of miniseries: *Badger: Zen Pop Funny-Animal Version* (two issues, 1994) and *Badger: Shattered Mirror* (four issues, 1994). Three years later, Baron took his emotionally challenged hero to Image Comics in another attempt to helm an ongoing Badger series. But this run lasted only eleven issues, either because of the industry's general sales slump, or because late 1990s audiences were unreceptive to over-the-top superheroics based on mental illness. To those who would find offense in Norbert Sykes' insanity-fueled adventures, however, the Badger would no doubt send one of his trademark verbal barbs: "Critics are grinks and groinks."

In 2007, IDW Publishing began releasing some new Badger stories—the one-shot special *Badger: Bull*, and a miniseries, *Badger Saves the World*—as well as reprinting past Badger tales in trade paperback collections. *—MAM*

Bartman

Fox's long-running animated television series *The Simpsons* (1990–present) is replete with references to superhero comics, from Bartman (the ersatz superhero persona of America's favorite bad boy, Bart Simpson) and the stereotypically slovenly "Comic Book Guy" who runs the Android's Dungeon comic shop, to cameo appearances of the cast of the 1960s *Batman* television show, to the revelation that the fictitious nuclear-enabled muscleman called Radioactive Man has been the country's most influential superhero for about half a century (or so it is told in the fictitious and geographically inscrutable town of Springfield).

In 1993 Bongo Comics (spearheaded by Steve and Cindy Vance, Bill Morrison, and *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening) underscored the cultural importance of Radioactive Man (Bartman's principal inspiration) by actually publishing some of the atomic hero's key adventures—the very comics read by Bart Simpson, Milhouse Van Houten, Martin Prince, and the rest of the superhero fans of the Simpsonverse. Among these four-color snapshots of Radioactive Man's decades-long evolution are: the sought-after November 1952 *Radioactive Man* premiere issue (1993), which includes an origin story that lampoons the Incredible Hulk, Superman, Batman, 1950s red-baiting, and the Comics Code Authority; May 1962's *Radioactive Man* #88 (1994), which lovingly skewers Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and superheroes' teenage sidekicks; August 1972's *Radioactive Man* #216 (1994), which parodies the pro-social "relevance" of DC's *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* ("Jeepers!" exclaims a shocked Man of Atoms, "My sidekick *Fallout Boy* is a dirty *Hippy*!"); October 1980's 412th-issue sendup of Chris Claremont and John Byrne's "Dark Phoenix" X-Men saga (1994); January 1986's 679th-issue jab at Marvel's *Punisher,* DC's *Watchmen,* and *The Dark Knight Returns* (1994); January 1995's watershed *Radioactive Man* #1,000 (1994), which aims its barbs squarely at Todd McFarlane and the Image Comics aesthetic; and the Summer 1968 *Radioactive Man 80 Page Colossal* edition (1995), showcasing such gems of Silver Age camp as "Radioactive Man, Teen Idol," "The 1,001 Faces of Radioactive Ape," and a tale of the Radioactive Man of the far-flung future year of 1995. (Since the late 1990s, a regular if infrequent *Radioactive Man* series has been gently massacring the remaining eras and styles of comics history.)

Subject to such powerful pop-cultural currents, it is no surprise that Bart Simpson would aspire to become a superhero himself, in the guise of Bartman. Bart first donned the purple cape and cowl on a second-season television episode titled "Three Men and a Comic Book" (1991), in an unsuccessful attempt to win a discount admission to a comic book convention. Despite this ignominious genesis—and in spite of a complete lack of superpowers, crime-fighting equipment, Batman-style training, or realistic prospects of maintaining a secret identity—Bartman managed to make a go of superheroics (at least in his own mind). Two years later, a one-shot comic book titled *Simpsons Comics and Stories* marked the advent of Bongo Comics and finally brought Bartman to the medium that inspired him in the first place. In a story titled "There Shall Come ... a Bartman!!" (written by Steve and Cindy Vance and illustrated by Bill Morrison and Mike Anderson), Bartman befriends Radioactive Man's elderly creator by preventing the venerable nuclear hero from being killed off by his rapa cious publisher as a sales gimmick—thereby making a comment on the stampede of speculation, hoarding, and dumping precipitated by DC's decision to (temporarily) kill Superman.

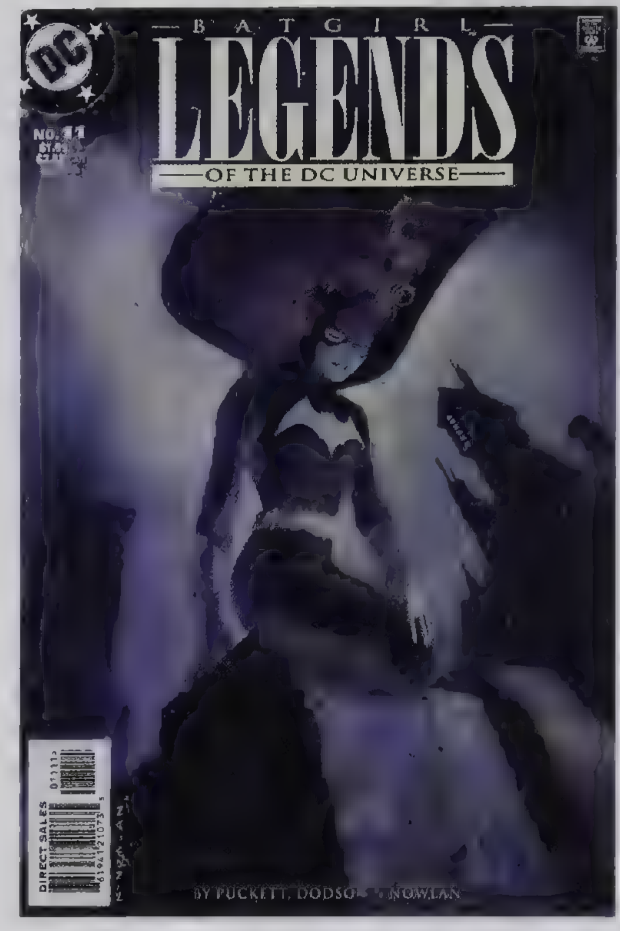
Bartman's first adventure proved popular enough to justify granting the spiky-haired, underachieving superhero a *Bartman* miniseries (1993–1995), featuring stories by Gary Glasberg, Bill Morrison, Jan Strnad, and Steve Vance, with art by Tim Bavington, Chris Clements, Luis Escobar, Jim Massara, Phil Ortiz, and Cindy Vance. During the series' six-issue run, Bartman stops the Comic Book Guy and school bullies Jimbo Jones, Dolph, and Kearny from scamming comics fans by adding fake "enhancements" to comic book covers; encounters the Penalizer (a Punisher pastiche); has an existential crisis that leads him to quit the hero business temporarily, in an homage to Peter Parker's historic super-sabbatical from *The Amazing Spider-Man* #50 (1967); transforms the family pet into "Bart Dog, the Canine Crusader," evoking shades of Ace the Bat-Hound from Batman stories of the 1950s; and fights alongside Radioactive Man himself against the entire population of Springfield after a nuclear mishap sends the townsfolk on a superpowered rampage that began in *Simpsons Comics* #5. In *Bartman* #5 (1995) Bart's sisters Lisa and Maggie swing into costumed action—as Lisa the Conjurer and the Great Maggeena—while Bartman is briefly sidelined by a sprained ankle.

Though Bartman has not seem much action during recent years, his fortunes might well change in the not-too-distant future. "I think there is a possibility of bringing Bartman back," Bongo Entertainment Group creative director Bill Morrison commented in 2003. "We're actually planning a couple of Bartman stories for upcoming issues of *Bart Simpson Comics*. We may decide to come out with a revived *Bartman* comic." In the meantime, back issues of *Bartman* and trade paperback reprints of the miniseries continue to be snapped up by enthusiastic Bartophiles. And comicdom waits eagerly for the famous Bart Signal to slice across the night sky of Springfield. —*MAM*

Batgirl

Batgirl was primarily created to attract a specific demographic. The ratings of ABC-TV's *Batman* series were slipping during its second season (1966–1967), and the show's producers brainstormed "Batgirl" to lure young girls (and lustful men) to the show for its third season. Dancer/actress Yvonne Craig was hired for the role, clad in a form-fitting, purple-and-gold Batsuit, and while her high-kicking antics may have ignited some amorous awakenings in the young boys watching, she couldn't save the series: Ratings continued to slump and *Batman* was canceled in 1968, after its third season.

During the program's run, DC Comics (publisher of the Batman comics franchise that inspired the TV show), attempted to imitate its success by adding camp humor and pop-art sound effects to the comic books. When DC's higher-ups caught wind of a Batgirl joining the show's cast, they gave Julius "Julie" Schwartz, editor of *Batman* and *Detective Comics*, the mandate to create an all-new Batgirl for the comics (a teenage heroine calling herself Bat-Girl [alter ego Betty Kane] had premiered in *Batman* #139, in April 1961, and made a few scattered appearances before fading into oblivion). The result was "The Million Dollar Debut of Batgirl!" in *Detective Comics* #359, January 1967. Behind the bat-eared cowl was Barbara Gordon, a stunning redhead whose good looks and shapely figure belied the physical stereotype of her profession: librarian. The daughter of Gotham City police commissioner James Gordon, Barbara was headed to the Policemen's Masquerade Ball, wearing a black-yellow-and-blue Batgirl costume of her own design, when she by chance encountered a kidnapping attempt. Killer Moth, one of the more outrageous villains to harass Gotham City, was abducting millionaire Bruce Wayne when this masked "Batgirl," energized by an adrenaline rush, burst onto the scene and rescued Wayne. Thrilled by this exploit, Barbara maintained her Batgirl identity and continued to fight crime, ignoring the protestations of Batman, who feared that Batgirl's inexperience would bring her harm on the dangerous streets of Gotham.



Legends of the DC Universe #11 © 1998 DC Comics. (Cover art by Kevin Nowlan.)

Through a number of guest appearances in DC comic books in 1967 and 1968, Batgirl was portrayed in a manner considered sexist by contemporary social standards: Much of her arsenal was carried in a Batpurse attached to her utility belt, a *Detective* cover depicted her distracted by a run in her tights, and she even got into a cat-fight with Catwoman! But by the early 1970s Batgirl had matured, using her keen intellect, athletic dexterity, and burgeoning detective skills to solve petty and not-so-petty crimes. Soon, Barbara Gordon relocated to Washington, D.C., as a congresswoman, occasionally appearing as Batgirl in the nation's Capitol and even teaming with former Boy Wonder Robin (with the hint of a romance between the two). But as Batman comic books grew grimmer throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it was felt that Batgirl's existence weakened Batman's, and Barbara Gordon hung up her cowl—although the character continued to be merchandized by a variety of toy manufacturers still craving the girl demographic.

By the time Gordon resurfaced, in 1988, in the one-shot comic *Batman: The Killing Joke,* retroactive continuity revisions had now made her the niece—not the daughter—of Commissioner Gordon. In that story, the Joker, Batman's most maniacal foe, exacted revenge on his enemy by rampaging against those close to him. The Joker shot Barbara, leaving her a paraplegic confined to a wheelchair. Some readers at the time accused DC Comics of misogyny, as this brutal attack on Batgirl closely followed the poignant but violent death of Supergirl in DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths.* But this tragic moment actually heralded Barbara Gordon's reemergence. In *Suicide Squad* #23 (January 1989), Barbara became Oracle, a behind-the-scenes crusader whose development of a vast computer information network, along with her photographic memory and her uncanny hacking abilities, enabled her to ferret out information to help other heroes. In addition to aiding the Suicide Squad, Batman, and others, Oracle ultimately joined with Black Canary and the Huntress to form the Birds of Prey.

A new Batgirl was introduced in *Batman* #567 (July 1999), when a mute teenage drifter was befriended by Barbara Gordon. It was soon disclosed that this girl was actually Cassandra Cain, daughter of the notorious assassin David Cain, who had expertly trained his offspring in martial arts and other modes of combat. The intervention of Oracle and Batman helped reshape Cassandra's destiny, and now she heroically prowls the streets of Gotham as the new Batgirl. An Asian American, Cain has since adopted the new costumed identity of Blackbat.

The newest Batgirl is Stephanie Brown, who first appeared in *Detective Comics* #647 (August 1992), and is the daughter of one of Batman's adversaries, the Cluemaster. Stephanie became a costumed crime fighter called the Spoiler and briefly became Batman's protégé as the new Robin. Eventually, Cassandra Cain gave her Batgirl costume to Stephanie, who took over the role in *Batgirl* #1 (August 2009).

In tandem with, but contrary to DC Comics' print continuity, Barbara Gordon as Batgirl has continued a mainstream profile on the small and large screens. In animation, Batgirl appeared in several shows, including *The Batman/Superman Hour* (1968–1969), *The Adventures of Batman and Robin* (1969–1970), and *The New Adventures of Batman* (1977). She didn't reappear on television until Fox's second season of *Batman: The Animated Series,* where she made her debut in the two-part "Shadow of the Bat" (September 13–14, 1993), and became a semi-regular on that series and its later incarnations, *The Adventures of Batman & Robin* (1994–1997, Fox) and *The New Batman/Superman Adventures* (1997–1999, the WB). She arrived on the big screen in summer 1997's live-action film *Batman & Robin,* in which Alicia Silverstone played the superheroine (albeit altered to Barbara Wilson, the niece of Bruce Wayne's butler Alfred). Batgirl also appeared in the direct-to-video animated films *Batman & Mr. Freeze: SubZero* (March 1998) and *Batman: Mystery of the Batwoman* (October 2003), as well as in much older form in the futuristic TV spin-off cartoon *Batman Beyond* (1998–2001). Actress Dina Meyer was cast as Barbara Gordon/Oracle (with flashbacks to her Batgirl career) in the short-lived *Birds of Prey* live-action series, on the WB network from fall 2002 through early 2003. The Barbara Gordon version of Batgirl also appears in episodes of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.*

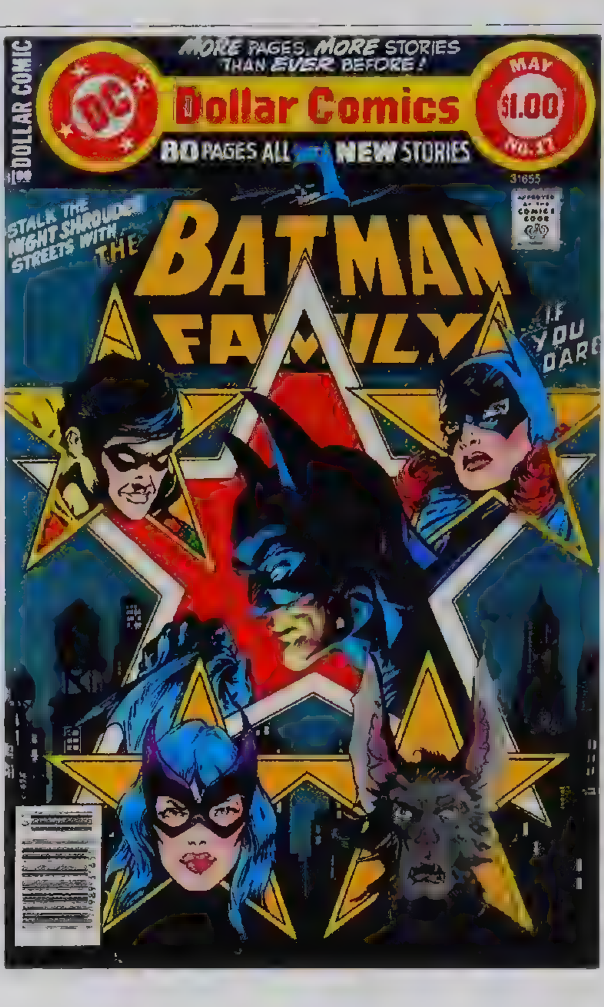
No longer crippled, Barbara Gordon triumphantly returned to her costumed identity in the new *Batgirl* series that began in September 2011, written by Gail Simone, with art by Ardian Syaf and Vicente Cifuentes. —*ME & PS*

Batman

Creature of the night. Caped cubmaster. Quipping crime fighter. Masked detective. Vengeful vigilante. At various times throughout his illustrious career, Batman has been all of the above, adapting to shifting social climes while enduring as one of the most recognizable pop-culture icons ever.

Cartoonist Bob Kane compensated for his limited artistic talent with his uninhibited imagination and unabashed mimicry. Inspired by a host of influences—Leonardo da Vinci's "ornithopter" design, Douglas Fairbanks' swashbuckling outing in *The Mask of Zorro* (1920), and pulp heroes the Shadow and the Spider, among others—Kane sketched a black masked, red-costumed bat-man; an image refined by recommendations from his silent partner, writer Bill Finger, into the black-and-grey version of the hero soon to become famous as Batman. While Kane, to this day, remains the sole credited creator of Batman, Finger's contributions cannot be overlooked. By his own admission, Kane offered the *look* of the dark prowler, but Finger provided the *story.*

The origin of DC Comics' Batman (which wasn't revealed to readers until the character's seventh appearance) is a now-familiar fable rooted in tragedy. As prosperous physician Thomas Wayne, his social butterfly wife, Martha, and their young son, Bruce, exit a Gotham City movie house after a nighttime showing of *The Mark of Zorro,* they are robbed by a thief brandishing a pistol. Dr. Wayne valiantly attempts to protect his wife, but the panicky gunman murders the adult Waynes as their horrified son watches. The grief-stricken lad dedicates his very existence to avenging his parents' murders by "spending the rest of my life warring on all criminals." After years of training his mind and body to perfection—Wayne, having inherited his father's millions—mulls over a crime-fighting disguise that will terrorize lawbreakers. A bat flaps through an open window, and Wayne deems it an omen. The origin's end caption heralds, "And thus is born this weird avenger of the dark ... this avenger of evil. The Batman."



Batman Family #17 © 1978 DC Comics. (Cover art by Michael Kaluta.)

Premiering in May 1939 in *Detective Comics* #27, the Batman became a sudden sensation. In his earliest adventures, Batman (alternately called "Bat-Man" until the hyphen was dropped for consistency) was quite brutal: He tossed a thug off of a rooftop and executed a vampire by shooting him with a silver bullet. Batman's violent methods earned him an enemy: police commissioner James Gordon. Gordon, a mainstay of Batman's mythos since the character's very first story, sicced the Gotham Police Department on this peculiar, winged troublemaker, until later forming an uneasy alliance with Batman after it became obvious they were playing on the same team.

As Batman's acclaim swelled, the character's publisher recoiled, fearful that the sinister elements in the comic book would be emulated by its young audience. DC eliminated Batman's use of firearms and extreme force—never again would Batman take a life. Just under a year after the hero's debut, DC softened him even more in *Detective* #38 (April 1940) by introducing Robin the Boy Wonder. Robin—actually Dick Grayson, a circus aerialist—observes the mob ordered murder of his parents and becomes the ward of a sympathetic Wayne, who trains the lad as his crime-fighting ally. *Detective*'s sales briskly escalated with Robin's inclusion. The Boy Wonder, exuberant and wisecracking, had a profound influence on the brooding Batman. The former "weird avenger" stepped smoothly into the role of father figure.

While maintaining the lead spot in *Detective*, Batman was awarded his own title in the spring of 1940, with artists Jerry Robinson and Sheldon Moldoff signing on to help illustrate the additional material (but never signing their stories, due to Kane's creator's deal). *Batman* #1 introduced two villains who would become integral components of the character's history: the sneering clown prince of crime, the Joker, and the sultry princess of plunder, the Catwoman (although she was called "The Cat" during her initial appearance). Batman and Robin were soon challenged by a growing contingent of odd antagonists: The frightful Scarecrow, the larcenous Penguin, and the puzzling Riddler were just some of the rogues who repeatedly took on this "Dynamic Duo." When not battling their bizarre rogues' gallery, Batman and Robin were mopping up mobsters, or unearthing clues to crimes and mysteries that challenged readers to play along as armchair detectives.

Batman and Robin's synchronized acrobatics and deductive mastery dazzled readers, as did their arsenal: They each sported utility belts containing the tools of their trade, including Batarangs (bat-winged boomerangs), Bat-ropes (for climbing and swinging), microcameras and tape recorders, gas pellets, acetylene torches, bolas, respirators, first-aid kits, penlights, and Bat-cuffs. For transportation, the Dynamic Duo hit the streets in their Batmobile, the skies in their Batplane, and the sea in their Batboat, an armada warehoused in the secret Batcave beneath the hero's grand home, Wayne Manor. By 1942, Commissioner Gordon—in a full reversal from the days when he ordered his officers to fire upon the Batman—was summoning the hero into action by illuminating the nighttime skies of Gotham City with the Bat-signal.

The Dynamic Duo's burgeoning popularity could not be contained in two magazines alone. They soon appeared in DC's *World's Best* (later *World's Finest*) *Comics*, and in 1943 swung into their own newspaper strip, a medium in which they encountered their first defeat—at the hands of a hero who would soon be their ally, Superman. Many newspapers declined to carry the *Batman* daily and Sunday strips since they were already running the *Superman* feature, cutting short Batman and Robin's first excursion into the funny papers after a mere two years. Nonetheless, Batman didn't hold a grudge: He and Robin guest starred on several episodes of the radio program *The Adventures of Superman* in the mid-1940s.

Straying even further from Batman's grim roots, DC introduced a comic-relief character in *Batman* #16 (1943): a gentleman's gentleman named Alfred Beagle (whose last name was changed to Pennyworth). The son of the butler of Bruce Wayne's father, Alfred surprised Wayne and Grayson by showing up on their doorstep—and surprised them even *more* when he discovered their Batman and Robin guises. The humorous element was quickly abandoned, though, and Alfred became the Dynamic Duo's valuable and trusted aide.

Unlike DC's and Marvel Comics' patriotic paragons, Superman and Captain America, Batman did very little for the war effort in the 1940s other than hawk bonds on his covers. Flag waving and Nazi bashing were not his forte—he and Robin invested their energies in keeping American citizens safe at home. In addition to their comics appearances, they segued into movie theaters in two serials, *Batman* (1943) and *The New Adventures of Batman and Robin* (1949).

As most superheroes were put out to pasture after World War II, Batman was one of three DC Comics characters to maintain his own series, the others being Superman and Wonder Woman. Survivors Superman and Batman even joined forces as "Your Two Favorite Heroes—Together" in the pages of *World's Finest*. Despite Batman's resiliency (and the emergence of popular artist Dick Sprang, whose interpretation of the Joker remains one of the classic renditions of the character), the 1950s were unkind to the cowled crime fighter and his sidekick. The science fiction craze that mushroomed out of the atomic age injected concepts into the Batman comic books ill-suited to their street-level milieu: Time travel, mutations of Batman and Robin, invading aliens, and giant insects were common themes.

The biggest threat facing Batman and Robin in the 1950s, however, was real-life psychiatrist Frederic Wertham. In his scathing book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), Dr. Wertham charged that the comic book industry was morally corrupting its impressionable young readers, impeaching Batman and Robin in particular for flaunting a gay lifestyle. Wertham wrote, "They live in sumptuous quarters, with beautiful flowers in large vases, and have a butler. It is like a wish dream of two homosexuals living together." Granted, our hero didn't have much luck with women—Wayne zipped through a throng of beauties like Julie Madison, Vicki Vale, and Kathy Kane, and Batman was tantalized by femme fatale Catwoman and, on a couple of instances, even Superman's girlfriend, Lois Lane. But if DC's writers and editors intended the Dynamic Duo's relationship as a gay metaphor, it's a secret that has remained closeted to this day. In response to Wertham's damaging allegations and ensuing parental and U.S. Senate criticism, DC Comics built a wholesome "Batman Family" with the Caped Crusader as its pointy-eared patriarch. Soon Batman and Robin were joined by Batwoman and Ace the Bat-Hound, as well as Bat-Girl, and even the magical imp Bat-Mite. Batman's ghoulish adversaries were either neutered or discarded from the series. For years, DC produced a kinder, gentler Batman—and readers defected—sending *Batman* and *Detective Comics* to the brink of cancellation.

Editor Julius "Julie" Schwartz, who launched the Silver Age of comics (1956–1969) through his renovations of Golden Age (1938–1954) favorites the Flash, Green Lantern, and the Justice Society of America (reworked in 1960 as the Justice *League,* a team that counted Batman among its eminent roster), was tapped by DC to work his magic on Batman. Enter the "New Look" era in 1964: Schwartz updated the appearance of the hero by adding a yellow oval to Batman's chest insignia; hired *Flash* illustrator Carmine Infantino to modernize the artwork; evicted the codependent Batman Family, except for Robin; and excised the silly sci-fi gimmickry that had strangled the character for more than ten years. Detective mysteries became the norm, Batman's rogues' gallery reappeared (with new additions like Blockbuster), and Robin was franchised out for membership in a junior Justice League called the Teen Titans. The only bad call Schwartz made was the elimination of Alfred, Batman's butler, who died in 1964 and was replaced by Grayson's Aunt Harriet—Schwartz's volley to counter Wertham's contentions of a decade earlier—but that decision was soon reversed and Alfred was resurrected.

On January 12, 1966, ABC premiered a live-action *Batman* television series starring handsome Adam West as Batman/Wayne and unseasoned newcomer Burt Ward as an effervescent Robin/Grayson. *Batman* bubbled with flashy costumes and sets (at a time when color television was relatively new), pop-art sound-effect graphics ("Pow!" "Zowie!"), a surfin' soundtrack by Neal Hefti, and guest appearances by popular celebrities as villains. The show's flamboyant action enthralled kids, while its campy humor amused parents. *Batman,* which aired twice a week (the first night's cliff-hanger would be resolved "tomorrow night, same Bat-time, same Bat-channel," as the narrator promised), was not only an immediate hit, it birthed a national phenomenon. America went "Bat" crazy: West as Batman appeared on major magazine covers including *Life* and *TV Guide,* Ward as Robin became a teen heartthrob, an unprecedented wave of Bat-merchandise was sold to boys *and* girls, the *Batman* newspaper strip resumed, and a theatrical movie was churned out for the summer of 1966.

DC plastered Batman on as many comics as possible—the hero usurped *Justice League* and *World's Finest* covers from his partners, and Batman team-ups took over the title *The Brave and the Bold.* The entire genre of superheroes benefited from this Batmania, with costumed crime fighters new and old taking over the airwaves, comics racks, and toy shelves for a few

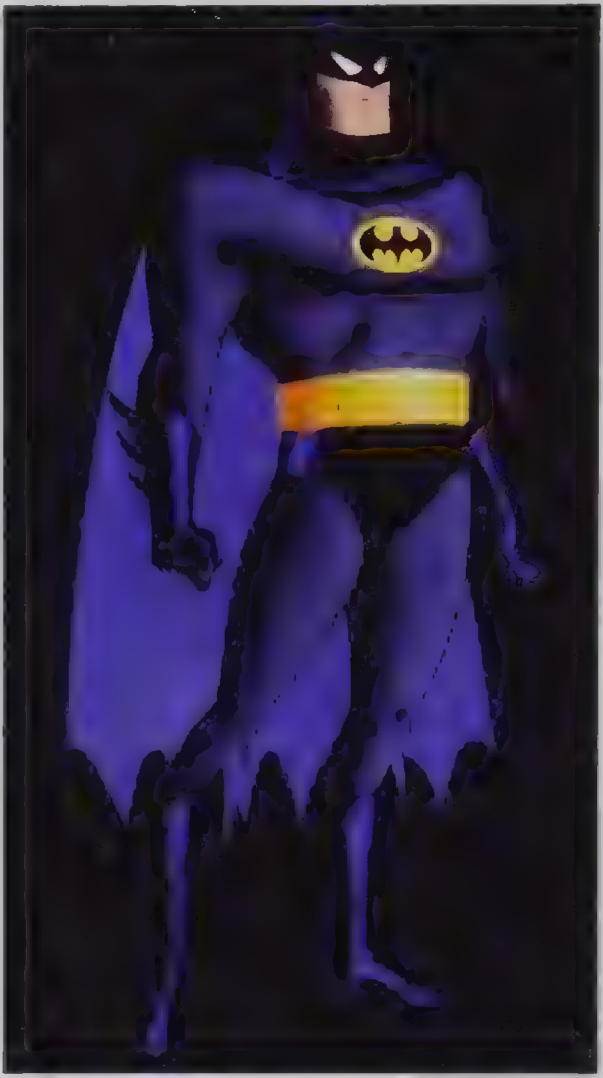
Adam West (R) as Batman in the 1960s camp television series with costar Burt Ward as Robin. (20th Century-Fox / The Kobal Collection.)

years. ABC's *Batman* returned for two more seasons, but ratings sagged each year (despite the introduction of Yvonne Craig in season three as Batgirl, a character also inserted into the comics), and the show was axed in 1968; although Batman segued to Saturday-morning television in September 1968 as part of the animated *The Batman/Superman Hour.*

The inflated comic book sales DC enjoyed from the television show's hit status quickly deflated once it left the air and Batman needed another shot in the arm. Artist Neal Adams' photo-realistic illustrations and experimental layouts on the Deadman series in DC's *Strange Adventures* had made him comics' "it" boy. With the Batman/Deadman pairing in *The Brave and the Bold* #79 (1968), Adams began a stint on that team-up title that would, with each issue, revitalize the look of Batman: the hero's bat ears began to grow longer, his brow became more menacingly furrowed, his cape engulfed comics panels like flowing batwings, and his escapades always took place at night—even when scripter Bob Haney called for a daytime scene! Adams took it upon himself to restore Batman to his roots as a foreboding nocturnal force—he was "the" Batman again. Editor Schwartz noticed, and recruited Adams to the main Bat-titles.

Other changes were transpiring at the same time: In late 1969, Dick Grayson left home for college (and his own adventures as Robin the *Teen* Wonder), and Wayne and Alfred temporarily boarded up the mansion and relocated into a high-rise in the heart of Gotham. New and frightening foes like Man-Bat and Ra's al Ghul appeared, Two-Face returned from limbo, and the Joker was transformed from a clownish buffoon into a homicidal maniac. Throughout the 1970s, writers like Dennis O'Neil, Steve Englehart, and Len Wein, and dynamic artists including Adams, Dick Giordano, and Marshall Rogers produced gothic, atmospheric masterpieces that are still lauded by readers over thirty years later. Batman overcame a sales slump in the early 1970s and was again being exploited by DC by the mid-1970s: *The Joker, Man-Bat,* and *The Batman Family* joined DC's lineup. Batman's romantic life became a captivating soap opera; Batman cavorted with Talia, the vivacious but villainous daughter of his new foe Ra's al Ghul, and Wayne fell in love with the natty Silver St. Cloud, who actually deduced his dual identity by recognizing Bruce's chin in the Batmask. While Batman was the "Darknight Detective" in DC's comics, television wouldn't allow the light-hearted interpretation of the hero to die: Witness ABC's kid-friendly *Super Friends* (beginning in 1973 and running, in various incarnations, until the mid-1980s) and CBS's *The New Adventures of Batman* (1977, featuring the voices of West and Ward). West and Ward even donned their colorful costumes once again in 1978 for a pair of campy one-hour television specials called *Legends of the Super-Heroes* (also featuring the Flash, Green Lantern, the Riddler, and other good and bad guys).

This didn't faze DC's comic-book Batman, however. In the 1980s, his comics explored grimmer themes: Batman became a vampire, blew off his Justice League pals and formed the Outsiders, and encountered freakish new villains like the bone-crushing Killer Croc. By 1984, Grayson had hung up his red Robin tunic to become Nightwing, and troubled teen Jason Todd was introduced as the new—and rebellious—Boy Wonder. Batman's most influential moment of the decade occurred with *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), a four-issue miniseries by writer/artist Frank Miller and inker Klaus Janson. Set in the near future, *Dark Knight* portrayed a grizzled, booze-addled Bruce Wayne crawling out of retirement to restore order to a chaotic Gotham as the Batman. Miller's gritty take on Batman established a template for other writers and artists to follow. Batman comics grew somber, and sometimes graphically startling: The manic Joker debased and nearly killed Commissioner Gordon and Batgirl in *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988), and *did* kill the new Robin—echoing reader demand from a phone-in contest—in *Batman* #428 (1988). A new Robin, Tim Drake, entered the following year, as did another Tim, real-life movie director Tim Burton.



The Emmy Award-winning *Batman: The Animated Series* had a successful television run from 1992 to 1995. (Sunrise/WB/The Kobal Collection).

Burton, a wild-haired, cartoonish figure himself, was fascinated by fantasy: His earliest cinematic efforts included *Frankenweenie* (1984) and *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* (1985). So when he took on the project of bringing Batman to the big screen, comics fans were thrilled ... until they learned of his casting choice. Michael Keaton, a quirky actor slight of build and best known for comedy roles in *Mr. Mom* (1983) and Burton's own *Beetlejuice* (1988), was chosen by the director to play Wayne/Batman. A delegation of comics fans demanded Keaton's removal from the project; Burton was convinced, however, that the wild look in Keaton's eyes would give him the edge to portray the obsessed hero. Box-office receipts proved him right: *Batman* (1989), which included Jack Nicholson as the Joker and Kim Basinger as love interest Vicki Vale, was the year's megahit, spawning a wave of Bat-merchandise the likes of which had not been seen since 1966.

BATMAN SOARS

Batman's next pivotal year was 1992. Burton and Keaton were back in theaters with *Batman Returns*, inspiring a television cartoon spinoff that fall: the noir-ish *Batman: The Animated Series*. In the comics, a brutish crime lord called Bane deposed Gotham's guardian by snapping Batman's spine and triumphantly pitching him off a rooftop. During his convalescence, Wayne was replaced by a psychotically violent surrogate Batman named Jean Paul Valley (a.k.a. Azrael). Once healed, the true Batman overcame Valley and resumed "the mantle of the Bat." Even the leveling of Gotham City by an earthquake, in DC's serialized storyline "No Man's Land" (1999), could not stop the hero.

During this period, writer Jeph Loeb and artist Tim Sale collaborated on a number of acclaimed and influential sagas set during Batman's early career, including *Batman: The Long Halloween* (1996–1997) and *Batman: Dark Victory* (1999–2000). Frank Miller wrote and drew *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* (2001), a sequel to his *Batman: The Dark Night Returns,* and collaborated with artist Jim Lee on *All-Star Batman and Robin,* which debuted in 2005, and presented an alternate version of the origin of the first Robin.

Starting in 2006, Grant Morrison and Paul Dini began to reinvigorate the *Batman* comic books. Batman discovered that he and Talia, the daughter of his adversary Ra's al Ghul, purportedly had a young son named Damian. In *Final Crisis* (2008–2009) Batman was seemingly killed, but actually was sent centuries back in time. In his absence, Dick Grayson, the original Robin, took over the role of Batman, and Damian became the new Robin. Upon his return to the present, Bruce Wayne, the original Batman, allowed Grayson to continue operating as Batman in Gotham City. In the new series, *Batman Incorporated,* which debuted in 2011, the original Batman travels the globe recruiting people to act as costumed crime fighters in countries around the world.

Bruce Wayne again became the sole Batman operating in Gotham City in the four comics series *Batman, Detective Comics, Batman and Robin,* and *Batman: The Dark Knight,* which all started over with new first issues in September 2011. Damian continues to serve as Robin, while Dick Grayson has returned to his identity of Nightwing.

The comics' sales have no doubt been bolstered by the successful series of recent Batman films. Warner Bros. and director Christopher Nolan successfully relaunched the Batman film franchise with *Batman Begins* in 2005, written by David S. Goyer and Nolan. Drawing on Frank Miller's *Batman: Year One* comics, *Batman Begins* retold the saga of Batman's origin, showing his training and his early days as a costumed crime fighter. The strong cast included Christian Bale as Batman/Bruce Wayne, Michael Caine as Alfred, Gary Oldman as future Commissioner James Gordon, and Morgan Freeman as Wayne's inventor and ally Lucius Fox, along with Katie Holmes as a new character, Wayne's childhood friend Rachel Dawes. The villains were Ra's al Ghul, portrayed by Liam Neeson, and the Scarecrow, played by Cillian Murphy.

The 2008 sequel, *The Dark Knight,* directed by Nolan, who collaborated with Goyer on the story, was an even bigger commercial and critical success. Bale, Caine, Oldman, Freeman, and Murphy all returned in this film, with Maggie Gyllenhaal taking over the role of Rachel. Aaron Eckhart played crusading district attorney Harvey Dent, who in the course of the film becomes the supervillain Two-Face. The standout performance in the film was the late Heath Ledger's extraordinary portrayal of the Joker, for which he won a posthumous Academy Award as Best Supporting Actor.

In 2008 Warner Bros. Animation also launched a new animated series on Cartoon Network, *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* with Diedrich Bader as the voice of Batman. Like the DC comic book after which it is named, the series teams Batman up with various other characters from the DC universe. In sharp contrast to the

Christian Bale as Batman in 2008's *The Dark Knight* kept step with the stellar performance by the late Heath Ledger as the Joker. (Warner Bros./DC Comics / The Kobal Collection.)

dark, realistic tone of Nolan's *Batman* movies, this new animated series captures the lighter tone of DC comics of the 1960s. It even pays homage to the 1966 *Batman* live action series, whose star, Adam West, provides voices in some episodes.

Christopher Nolan concludes his trilogy of *Batman* movies with *The Dark Knight Rises*, whose story is by Goyer and Nolan (2012). Bale, Caine, Oldman, and Freeman again return in their familiar roles, with Anne Hathaway as Selina Kyle, Catwoman's alter ego, and Tom Hardy as the villain Bane.

Bolstered by a convoy of comic book titles and specials, a perennial line of action figures (more than one hundred variations of Batman figures have been produced since the 1990s), an enduring television presence (the 1966 *Batman* series began airing weekly on TV Land in 2004, and on the Hub starting in 2010, and *Batman: The Animated Series* continued for years, inspiring the futuristic *Batman Beyond* and the superteam *Justice League* cartoon shows), and live-action movies, the Dark Knight shows no signs of age. *—ME, PS & GM*

Batwoman

Batwoman was created to be a strong female counterpart to Batman, "a mysterious and glamorous girl" who, according to her first story, was his "great rival" as "a champion of the law"—one who could match his "superb acrobatic skill, his scientific keenness, his mastery of disguise and detective skill!" Over the decades, six different characters have proudly adopted the name and persona of Batwoman.

The original Batwoman, Kathy Kane, made her debut in a story written by Edmond Hamilton in *Detective Comics* #233 (July 1956). She was obviously named after Bob Kane, Batman's co-creator, but she was first drawn by Sheldon Moldoff, one of the many "ghosts" who created artwork attributed to Mr. Kane. One reason for creating Batwoman was to give Batman a female romantic interest, thereby countering the charge made by Dr. Frederic Wertham in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) that Batman was gay.

According to the first version of her origin, Kathy Kane is a rich heiress with an unusual background as a former circus performer. She decides to use the athletic skills she had developed to become a costumed crime fighter in imitation of Batman, and eventually becomes a frequent ally of Batman and Robin. In 1961 Kathy's niece, Betty Kane, became Batwoman's sidekick, the original Bat-Girl. Thus Robin was given a romantic interest as well.

However, when DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz took charge of *Batman* and *Detective* in 1964, he dropped Batwoman and Bat-Girl from the series without explanation—presumably believing them to be nonessential and perhaps dated. Two years later he presided over the creation of Barbara Gordon, the new Batgirl (without the hyphen in her name), thus giving Batman a female counterpart whose sleek, stylish costume made her look much more modern than Batwoman. Eventually Batwoman emerged from retirement in 1979, only to be killed that same year by Batman's foes, the League of Assassins.

Decades later DC Comics introduced a new Batwoman, Kate Kane, who made her first appearance in issue #7 of the year-long series *52* (July 2006). Many writers had a hand in her creation, but it was artist Alex Ross who designed the new Batwoman's costume.

Attitudes in American society had changed tremendously in the half century since the first Batwoman debuted. Whereas the original Batwoman was created partially to show that Batman was not gay, DC Comics presented the new Batwoman as a lesbian from her very first appearance, in order to bring more diversity to the DC universe of characters. (Kate Kane also has been established as Jewish.)

When Kate was twelve, she, her mother Gabrielle, and her sister Beth were taken hostage by armed criminals; though Kate was rescued, Gabrielle and seemingly Beth were killed. Years later Kate attended the U.S. Military Academy, but had to leave when she was revealed to be gay. Inspired by Batman's example, Kate decided to become a superheroine, aided by her father, Colonel Jake Kane. The new Batwoman starred in the lead feature of *Detective Comics*, from issues #854 to #863, and received her own ongoing comic book series in 2011.

There have also been Batwomen in animation. In the direct-to-video animated film *Batman: Mystery of the Batwoman* (2003), three different women share the role of the masked vigilante Batwoman: police detective Sonia Alcana, Dr. Roxanne Ballantine, and Kathy Duquesne, the daughter of a gangster. Actress Kyra Sedgwick provides the voice of this Batwoman. A 2010 episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* features a Batwoman who wears the same costume that Kathy Kane did, but who is identified as Katrina Moldoff. Ordered into retirement from costumed crime fighting by a court, Moldoff uses magic to switch bodies with Batman, but ends up back in her own body and goes to prison. The Kate Kane version of Batwoman appears in the *DC Universe Online* video game. —*PS*

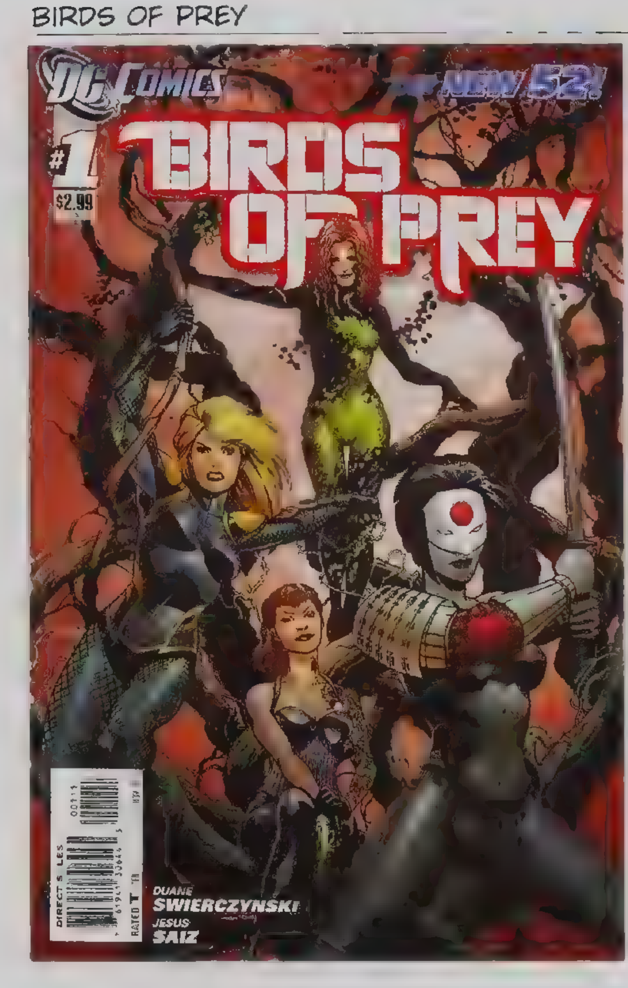
Birds of Prey

Even with a dozen or so costumed vigilantes prowling over its rooftops, Gotham City is filled with crime. Most of the heroes have had interaction with Batman, and some have even been his protégés. One such heroine was Barbara Gordon, whose career as Batgirl put many criminals behind bars. After the Joker shot her, a paraplegic Gordon refused to sink into self-pity, or accept that her crime-fighting career was over. Using money from Wayne Enterprises and other sources, the now wheelchair-bound Gordon established a base of operations in the Clocktower high above Gotham. There, utilizing an astonishing array of computers and electronics, Gordon became Oracle, an information broker who uses her databases and contacts to fight crime—not only in Gotham, but worldwide.

As leader of a rotating-membership superhero mini-group called Birds of Prey, Gordon first utilized Power Girl as an operative, but that relationship was disastrously short-lived. Oracle examined the other female superheroines whom she knew and settled upon Dinah Lance, the second-generation crime fighter known as the Black Canary. The daughter of the original Black Canary, Lance not only has consummate detective and martial arts skills, she also has a metagenetic ability to use a sonic "Canary Cry" to topple opponents and doorways alike.

Oracle has used other operatives as part of her Birds of Prey, allying herself with the mysterious crossbow-wielding Huntress, and even an occasional male hero, such as the Blue Beetle. Although Black Canary is also involved with the Justice Society of America, she prefers to work as one of Oracle's operatives. And for Barbara Gordon, the good she does as Oracle—helping Batman, Nightwing, the Justice League, or the Birds of Prey—balances out the mobility she lost to Gotham's craziest criminal.

Gordon first appeared as Oracle in *Suicide Squad* #29 (January 1989), her new persona the re-creation of writer John Ostrander. The *Birds of Prey* concept began as a series of one-shots and miniseries in 1996, and included appearances in



Birds of Prey #1 © 2011 DC Comics. (Cover art by Jesus Saiz and Nei Ruffino.)

Showcase and *Green Arrow*. The concept proved popular enough that a regular *Birds of Prey* series began in January 1999.

Although a *Birds of Prey* television series was introduced in 2002, all the characters had made appearances in television and film prior to this. Batgirl was featured in the 1960s *Batman* television series and the 1997 feature film *Batman & Robin*, as well as a number of animated TV series and films from the 1960s onward. Black Canary and Huntress both made a pair of television appearances in Hanna-Barbera's two *Legends of the Super-Heroes* primetime specials on NBC (airing February 3 and 10, 1977). These campy stories had a collection of superheroes interacting with supervillains in "The Challenge" and "The Roast." Black Canary was played by the one-named Danuta (Rylko-Soderman, later a television evangelist), while Huntress was played by Barbara Joyce.

On October 9, 2002, the WB network debuted a highly advertised, new live-action series called *Birds of Prey*, based loosely on the DC comic book. The narration at the show's beginning established the characters as a trio of heroines: Helena Kyle, a.k.a. Huntress (Ashley Scott), was the half-metahuman daughter of Batman and Catwoman; the former Batgirl Barbara Gordon, a.k.a. Oracle (Dina Meyer), was the wheelchair-bound computer genius; and Dinah Redmond (Rachel Skarsten) was the runaway metahuman daughter of the original Black Canary. Headquartered in the Clocktower, the trio protected New Gotham from villains of all sorts.

The series mixed a lot of concepts from the comics, including the original version of Huntress (the Batman's daughter concept that had been written out of continuity), and guest appearances by the Joker (only briefly), Harley Quinn, Lady Shiva, Clayface, and the original Black Canary. Barbara Gordon even donned her Batgirl suit a few times. Despite its high action quotient and Batman-esque promos, *Birds of Prey* only lasted for thirteen episodes, and the two-part finale aired on February 19, 2003.

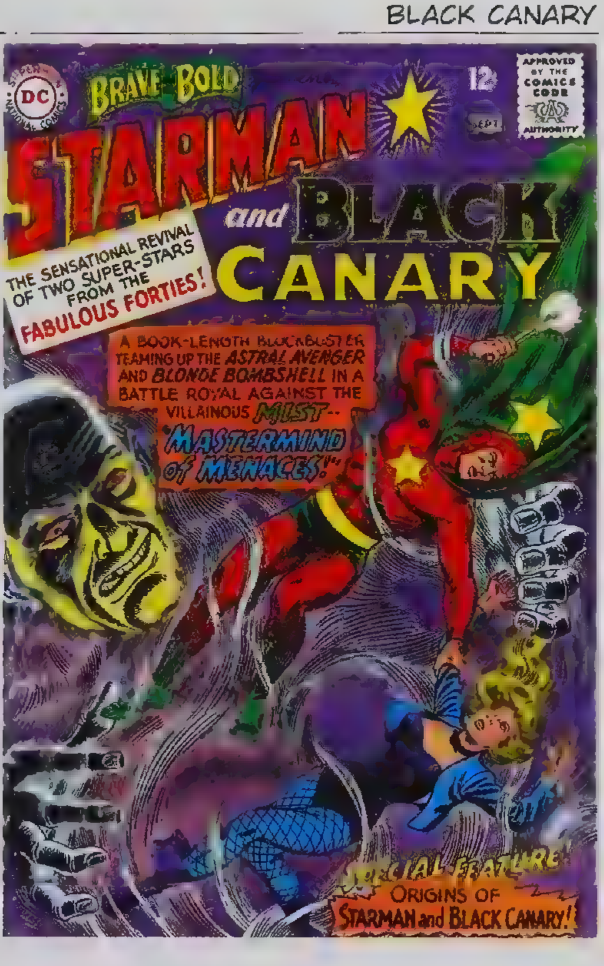
Although writer Jordan B. Gorfinkel conceived *Birds of Prey* and Chuck Dixon originally wrote it, Gail Simone is the writer perhaps most associated with the series. In her initial run she added the Huntress and Lady Blackhawk to the team's core membership. After she left the series it was canceled, in 2009. However, *Birds of Prey* returned in 2010, again written by Simone, who added the Hawk and the Dove to the team. A new *Birds of Prey* series began in September 2011, written by novelist Duane Swiercyznski and drawn by Jesus Saiz. —*AM & PS*

Black Canary

The Black Canary was the last major DC Comics superhero created in the Golden Age of comics (1938–1954), and in one form or another, she has proved to be one of the most enduring. She was introduced in the pages of *Flash Comics* #86, in August 1947, as a sort of villainous Robin Hood with a femme fatale twist, guesting in the Johnny Thunder strip. The Black Canary stole from criminals but kept the money herself, though Johnny—once he had got over his lovesick attraction for her—quickly persuaded her to go straight. She soon gained a solid fan following and as a result was able to repay Johnny's devotion by taking over his slot in the comic. She also ousted him from the Justice Society of America, and became the last new member to join.

While little was initially revealed of her origins, a 1970s story described how, as a child, Dinah Drake was relentlessly trained by her police lieutenant father to be a policewoman, only to see him die of a broken heart when she was turned down by the force. Inspired by such heroes as Batman, Drake resolved that she could best serve her father's memory by becoming a costumed crime fighter (by the time this story came out, it seems that everyone thought it best to ignore her brief fling with crime). So, dressed in dark halter-top, shorts, jacket, boots, fishnet stockings, and a blonde wig (her only element of disguise), Drake became the Black Canary. Armed only with her detective skills and martial arts knowledge, she proved to be quite a formidable character. In her civilian identity Drake ran a flower shop, but she seemed to spend just as much time fending off the amorous advances of boyfriend Larry Lance, a rather down-at-the-heels private eye. In a role reversal, and a welcome relief from the usual damsel-in-distress cliché, it was Lance who was frequently captured by villains and the Black Canary who had to rush in to save the day.

Written by Robert Kanigher and drawn by Carmine Infantino, the Black Canary strip ran for twelve installments—until *Flash Comics* was canceled. She also starred in twenty *Justice Society* tales up to 1951, when even that legendary strip went under. But when the Justice Society was brought back in the 1960s, as annual guests in *The Justice League,* the Black Canary was there, too, having apparently gone into semi-retirement and married Lance in the interim. Poor Lance did not last long after his wife's second stint on the team, as an encounter with a sentient star called Aquarius (in *Justice League* #74) resulted in his tragic death. A heartbroken Canary promptly jumped ship to the Justice League, to avoid the sad memories of Lance that would be brought back by seeing her old Justice Society teammates, and embarked on a long career with the League. She became romantically linked with the somewhat dissolute Green Arrow, and when he joined with Green Lantern in their ground-breaking early 1970s series, she went along as well.


DC
BRAVE BOLD
12¢
SEPT
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
STARMAN and BLACK CANARY
THE SENSATIONAL REVIVAL OF TWO SUPER-STARS FROM THE FABULOUS FORTIES!
A BOOK-LENGTH BLOCKBUSTER TEAMING UP THE ASTRAL AVENGER AND BLONDE BOMBSHELL IN A BATTLE ROYAL AGAINST THE VILLAINOUS MIST-- "MASTERMIND OF MENACES!"
SPECIAL FEATURE ORIGINS OF STARMAN and BLACK CANARY!

The Brave and the Bold vol. 1 #61 © 1965 DC Comics. (Cover art by Murphy Anderson).

Green Arrow became an archetypical anti-authority radical, and Black Canary, infused with the era's concerns, assumed advocacy of women's lib and operated with noticeably more self-assurance. Throughout the decade, she appeared both with and without Green Arrow in stories in *Adventure Comics, Action Comics,* and *World's Finest Comics,* as well as with the Justice League, and she became an integral part of DC's lineup. The 1980s were a less encouraging time for her, however, as she settled down into the role of Green Arrow's "old lady", and a civilian life working in (once more) a flower shop. In an attempt to cash in on the vogue for grittier heroes, the Green Arrow was toughened up in a 1987 miniseries, part of which involved the Black Canary being savagely attacked, tortured, and assaulted—going from powerful superheroine to victim in one ill-judged story. The violent assault also appears to have robbed her of her one superpower, a sort of sonic cry, which had been gifted her in the early battle with Aquarius in which her husband had been killed. In time, the romance with Green Arrow soured and the couple split.

In the mid-1990s *Zero Hour* series, DC attempted to simplify and reinvigorate its comics line, and in a confusing bit of retrofitting, editors decided that from the moment she joined the Justice League, fans had not been reading about the Black Canary of the 1940s but her daughter! However illogical this may have been, that period did indeed see a renewed interest in the character, with a short-lived solo series and a starring role in the *Birds of Prey* comic. The solo series proved to be an ill-considered attempt at (yet another) gritty reinvention, as Dinah Lance was given a wretched new costume and sent to take on Seattle's crack dealers. By contrast, in *Birds of Prey* Lance moved to Gotham City to join Oracle and Huntress in a far more life-affirming mixture of crime-busting and *Thelma and Louise*–style empowerment. A 2002 *Birds of Prey* TV show proved to be something of a disappointment to fans.

Black Canary finally married her longtime boyfriend Green Arrow, but their marriage ended after he was arrested for killing his adversary Prometheus. Black Canary, played by actress Alaina Huffman, has appeared in episodes of the television series *Smallville*. Black Canary has also appeared in episodes of the animated series *Justice League Unlimited* and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. *—DAR & PS*

The Black Cat

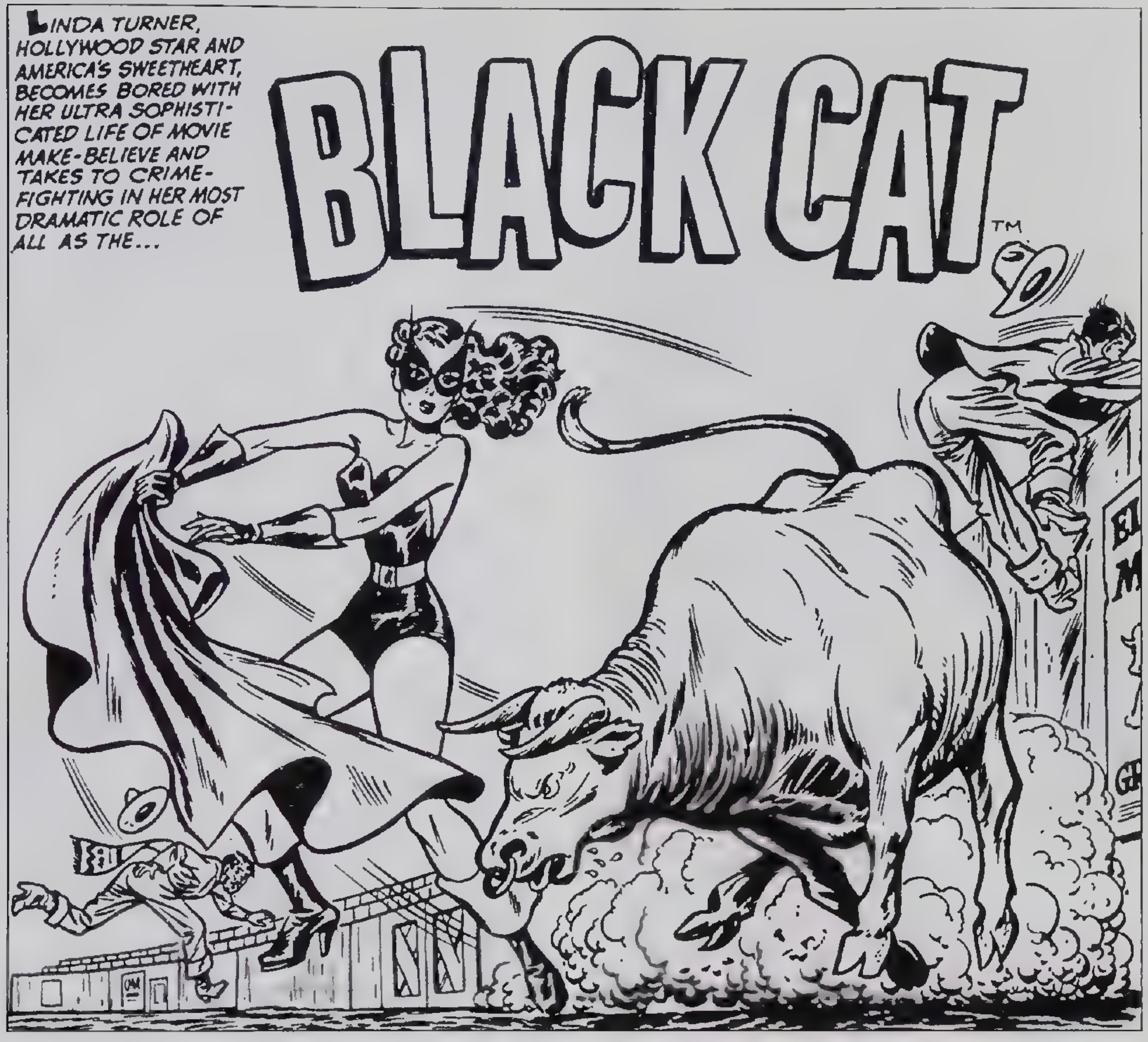
The Black Cat is responsible for several firsts in her medium: She starred in the first comic from the legendary Harvey Comics, *Pocket Comics* #1 (in August 1941), and was the first and longest-lived Harvey superhero, in addition to being the first major costumed superheroine to grace comic book pages.

Alfred Harvey had been an editor at Fox Comics when he decided to enter the comics market as a publisher himself, starting with *Pocket Comics*. As its name suggests, this was a digest-sized title, running up to one hundred pages, which Harvey packaged together with artist Joe Simon (of Captain America fame). The comic flew off the newsstands—but not in the way that Harvey expected! Its small size made it easy to steal, and light-fingered comics fans were carrying them off in droves. However, one of Harvey's creations in that first issue, the Black Cat (drawn by Al Gabrielle), would prove to be much more successful.

The Black Cat's alter ego, actress Linda Turner (named after real-life actresses Linda Darnell and Lana Turner) works for a tyrannical movie director called Garboil, whom she suspects is actually a Nazi Fifth-Columnist. Inspired by her cat's instant dislike of Garboil, she decides to adopt the identity of a cat—a black cat—and dons a suitably feline costume of a low-cut black swimsuit, black pointed mask, gloves, and boots. Her origin story announces her quite pointedly: "Linda Turner, Hollywood Star and America's Sweetheart, becomes bored with her ultra-sophisticated life of movie make-believe and takes to crime-fighting in her most dynamic role of all as the … BLACK CAT!"

Teaming up with pipe-smoking reporter Rick Horne, the Black Cat tracks down Garboil and his pals and smashes their spy ring. Horne soon becomes Turner's constant companion, reporting on set from her many films while secretly harboring a crush for the Black Cat—never suspecting that she and Turner are one and the same. Although not superpowered in the traditional sense of the word, Turner's years of stuntwork and Hollywood action scenes left her with an athletic physique and mastery of martial arts, making her a formidable opponent for any miscreant.

After four issues of *Pocket Comics*, Harvey switched "Hollywood's Glamorous Detective Star" over to the more conventionally sized *Speed*


LINDA TURNER, HOLLYWOOD STAR AND AMERICA'S SWEETHEART, BECOMES BORED WITH HER ULTRA SOPHISTICATED LIFE OF MOVIE MAKE-BELIEVE AND TAKES TO CRIME-FIGHTING IN HER MOST DRAMATIC ROLE OF ALL AS THE...
BLACK CAT™

The Black Cat (circa 1940s) from *Alfred Harvey's Black Cat* (1995). ™ & © Lorne-Harvey Publications Inc. (Art by Lee Elias.)

Comics, where she appeared throughout World War II (from issues #17 in 1942 to issue #38 in 1945), as well as in occasional strips in *All-New Comics*. Those were creditable enough stories, drawn by the likes of Jill Elgin, Bob Powell, and Arturo Caseneuve, but it was the largely forgettable Captain Freedom who was usually the title's cover star, and our heroine had to wait for the lifting of wartime paper restrictions and the creation of her own title before she could really come into her own. *Black Cat* #1 premiered in the summer of 1946 and, from issue #4, became one of the era's most attractive strips with the addition of Lee Elias on art. British artist Elias was a great talent, working in the tradition of Milton Caniff (famed creator of newspaper strips *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*), and he added finesse, glamour, and a touch of humor to the feature.

The postwar years were characterized by a succession of crazes for such disparate genres as romance, crime, funny animals, and horror, which Al Harvey was determined to exploit. Seeing that Westerns were suddenly in vogue, Harvey temporarily changed the comic's title to *Black Cat Western*, which saw the heroine swap her trademark motorcycle for a horse. That period lasted a mere four issues (#16–#19). Then, from issue #30, retaining the character's name but not her presence, the comic became *Black Cat Mystery*, one of several Harvey horror comics, and poor old Linda Turner was banished into limbo. After several years of astonishingly gory horror tales (drawn by Elias, Warren Kremer, Bob Powell, and others), the incoming self-censorship body, the Comics Code Authority, prompted a sudden change of direction and the title briefly reverted once more to *Black Cat Western,* complete with its old star (for #54–#56 in 1955).

These were the last Black Cat adventures for decades, as the comic's direction was changed back to "mystery" yet again when the mid-1950s superhero boom hoped for by Marvel, Magazine Enterprises, and others failed to materialize. After sporadic anthology issues of *Black Cat Mystery* in the late 1950s, the Black Cat herself reappeared to cash in on the 1960s superhero craze, but the three issues published then were reprints, which seemed out of place among the more sophisticated Marvel comics of that era.

Of course, Harvey Comics experienced enormous success throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s with its line of wholesome children's favorites, such as *Casper the Friendly Ghost, Little Dot, Sad Sack,* and *Richie Rich.* Elements of the Harvey empire were sold off in the 1980s, resulting in the Casper and Richie Rich movies, while other properties, notably the Black Cat, stayed within the Harvey family. Under its Recollection imprint, Harvey brought out nine issues of *The Original Black Cat* (1988–1992), while its Lorne-Harvey imprint released *Black Cat: The Origins* in 1995. The latter title mixed vintage Elias reprints with stories featuring a new Black Cat: movie stunt double Kim Stone. In the comic, this new Black Cat dons her costume to star in a film about the original Black Cat. Indeed, there were rumors of a Black Cat feature film at the time, but the project proved to be a non-starter. Since the mid-1990s, no new Black Cat films or comics have appeared. —*DAR*

Black Knight

In the early 1950s the superhero genre had nearly vanished from comics, except for Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. But at Atlas Comics, the company today known as Marvel, writer/editor Stan Lee and artist Joe Maneely cleverly blended elements of the superhero genre with the legends of King Arthur and the Round Table to create the title character of *Black Knight* #1 (May 1955).

The Black Knight had a secret identity as Sir Percy of Scandia, who wore long blonde hair, shunned combat, and instead preferred playing music and the company of women. Stan Lee's unspoken subtext appeared to be that Sir Percy was pretending to be gay. But in actuality Sir Percy was secretly the Black Knight, the greatest champion of King Arthur and Camelot, and the enemy of the king's adversaries Mordred and Morgan Le Fay. The Black Knight's advisor and confidant was the sorcerer Merlin, who forged the Knight's enchanted Ebony Blade from a meteorite. The Black Knight's true love was Lady Rosamund, whom he eventually married as Sir Percy.

Nine years later, Stan Lee and artist Dick Ayers created a new, villainous Black Knight in *Tales to Astonish* #52 (February 1964). This was one of Sir Percy's descendants, Professor Nathan Garrett, who employed advanced science to create his Black Knight persona. For example, he genetically engineered a winged horse that he could ride through the air, and he devised a "power lance" that could fire blasts of energy. As the Black Knight, Garrett battled Giant-Man, the Avengers, and Iron Man. But in his last combat with Iron Man, Garrett fell from his winged horse while in flight and was mortally injured.

Garrett summoned his American nephew, Dane Whitman, to his deathbed, asked Whitman to restore honor to the family name, and then died. Using his uncle's methods, Whitman genetically engineered another flying horse, named Aragorn, and became a new, heroic Black Knight. Created by writer Roy Thomas, and artists John Buscema and Dane Whitman, the new Black Knight, debuted in *Avengers* #47 (December 1967).

Traveling to his ancestral estate, Garrett Castle, in England, Whitman encountered the ghost of Sir Percy. By succeeding in drawing the Ebony Blade from its scabbard, Whitman proved his worthiness to be the heroic successor of the Black Knight of King Arthur's time.

The modern Black Knight has been a longtime member of the Avengers, as well as serving in the Defenders and Heroes for Hire. He has also been an important ally of Doctor Strange. The Black Knight starred in his own feature in Marvel UK's *Hulk Weekly* (1979–1980) and in his own Marvel miniseries in the United States (1990).

DC Comics likewise has characters who are both knights and superheroes. Sir Justin, the Shining Knight, was created by writer/artist Creig Flessel and first appeared in *Adventure Comics* #66 (September 1941). He was one of King Arthur's knights, and Merlin endowed his horse, Victory, with wings. Sir Justin and Victory spent centuries in suspended animation until being awakened in 1941. He adopted a secret identity (Justin Arthur), and became a crime fighter and a member of a superhero team, the Seven Soldiers of Victory.

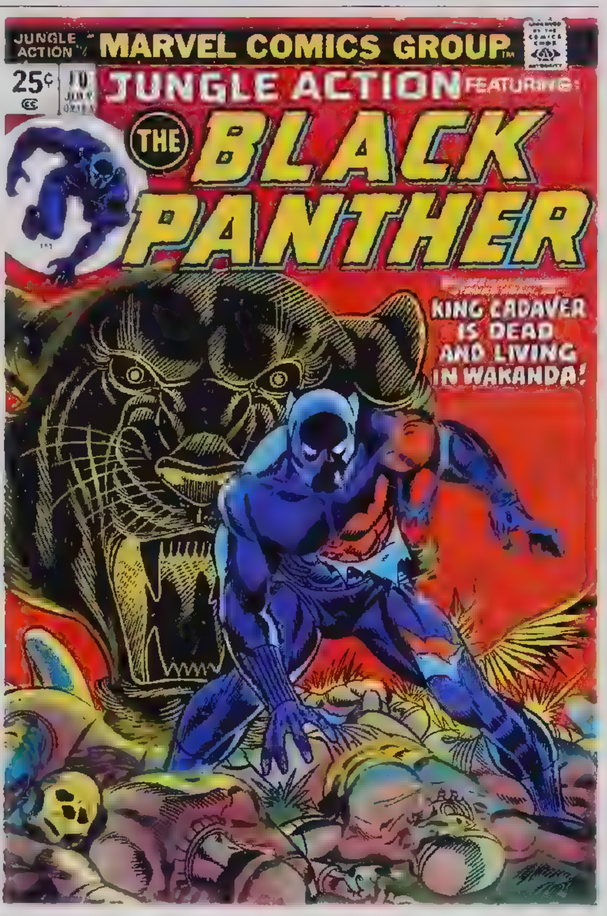
Another knight of King Arthur's time, Brian Kent, adopted the secret identity of the Silent Knight. Created by writer Robert Kanigher and artist Irv Novick, the Silent Knight first appeared in *The Brave and the Bold* #1 (August 1955). Recently it was revealed that the Silent Knight was one of the previous incarnations of the superhero Hawkman.

Writer Grant Morrison and artist Simone Bianchi created a new Shining Knight in *Seven Soldiers: Shining Knight* #1 (August 2005). This Knight is really a woman, Justina, who comes from about 8,000 B.C.E., millennia before King Arthur's time. She also has a flying horse, is transported to the present day, and becomes a member of Morrison's new Seven Soldiers of Victory.

The medieval Black Knight was in an episode of the animated TV series *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends,* while the modern Black Knight briefly appeared in an episode of the animated series *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes.* Sir Justin, the Shining Knight, has appeared in episodes of the *Justice League Unlimited* animated series. —*PS*

Black Panther

Within the course of one incredible year in the pages of Marvel Comics' *Fantastic Four,* the writer/artist duo Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created characters like the Inhumans, the Silver Surfer, Galactus, and the Black Panther—comics' first black superhero. To have debuted him in 1966 (in *Fantastic Four* #52) shows both bravery and prescience on Marvel's part; to their credit, the Black Panther would go on to take a central role in their comics for years to come. The Panther was T'Challa, chief of the hidden African country of Wakanda (traditionally, in comics,, African countries are always hidden). Wakanda was depicted as a peculiar mix of high-tech machinery and mud huts, its futuristic technology being derived from "vibranium", a metal found in a meteorite. The Black Panthers had been developed as a succession of elite guards, each in turn protecting the meteorite with the aid of sacred herbs which granted them fantastic strength and agility. T'Challa was the current inheritor of the Black Panther mantle (and all-black costume). After meeting the Fantastic Four, T'Challa decides



Jungle Action #10 © 1974 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Gil Kane and Frank Giacoia.)

his powers would be put to best use protecting the whole world (or at least America), and so he flies off to New York, leaving his people, and his rather impractical cape, behind.

For the next couple of years, the character flitted about from comic to comic before joining the Avengers in 1968, where he became a mainstay for the next seven years, save for the occasional jaunt back to Africa for the odd chunk of vibranium (which handily seemed to defeat most criminals). Marvel rarely made much of the Panther's color in the 1960s, but in the more radical 1970s he acquired a forthright, liberated girlfriend, Monica Lynne, and briefly became a teacher in the ghetto, while the Avengers took on the racist Sons of the Serpent. Although it seems to have been pure coincidence, Marvel could not help but note that one of their leading characters shared his name with the radical black-power movement the Black Panthers, and briefly changed his name to the Black Leopard. One month later, however, he was back to being the Black Panther again, and in 1973 was finally granted his own strip.

"Panther's Rage" ran for two years in the wonderfully titled *Jungle Action,* series written by Don McGregor and drawn for the most part by the African American artist Billy Graham. Reflecting the times' interest in African roots and black consciousness in general, the strip returned T'Challa to a Wakanda riven by infighting and sedition, where he managed to balance superheroics with musings on colonialism and democracy. The more overtly political material was leavened by the Panther's romance with Monica, which was surprisingly passionate for the time. For the duration of the tale, the strip featured an all-black cast, something that had never been attempted in comics before, and the innovations continued in a later story, which saw the Panther take on the Ku Klux Klan in Monica's native Georgia.

Poor sales prompted Marvel to cancel *Jungle Action* before the Klan story was finished, and replace it with a new Black Panther title by his creator, Jack Kirby. This new direction was as far from the gritty realism of McGregor's tales as it is possible to imagine, as the hero encountered the likes of King Solomon's Frog, the Yeti, and the Black Musketeers. Not surprisingly, this title, too, was short-lived. Sporadic appearances over the next two decades kept the Panther in the Marvel firmament, but he was increasingly marginalized. Miniseries in 1988 and 1991 were solid, if unspectacular, attempts at revitalizing what was effectively a lapsed franchise. The first tackled apartheid while the second dealt with the Panther's search for his mother, but neither led to anything substantial. With black characters no longer a comics novelty, and with role models such as the characters of Milestone Comics—which had more relevance to their readers than a wealthy African king—it seemed as if the Panther's time had passed.

However, in 1998, out of the blue, writer Christopher Priest reintroduced the hero as part of the slightly more adult "Marvel Knights" line, in a series that was acclaimed in every venue from the fan press to *Entertainment Weekly,* and continued for six years—by far the character's most successful run. For this reinvention, a now aging T'Challa returns to the urban jungle of New York armed with claws and the occasional gun, and after thirty years he once again sports a cape. In a series of hard-hitting tales, he abdicates, witnesses his daughter's murder, and then temporarily passes on the mantle of the Panther to a young cop, Kasper Cole.

Film director Reginald Hudlin was the initial writer on both the *Black Panther* series that ran from 2005 to 2008, and the next one, which began in 2009. T'Challa is now wed to Storm of the X-Men, in a marriage that unites Marvel's most prominent male and female African superheroes. —*DAR & PS*

Black Terror

Decades before Marvel introduced the Punisher, another grim, dark haired vigilante wore a similar black costume with a skull insignia. This was the Black Terror, "America's fighting nemesis of crime," who first appeared in *Exciting Comics* #9 (January 1941), and was created by writer Richard E. Hughes and artist Dave or Don (according to different sources) Gabrielson. The

Black Terror was the most popular and famous character published by the now obscure and defunct company called Standard Comics, which included the Nedor and Better lines of comics.

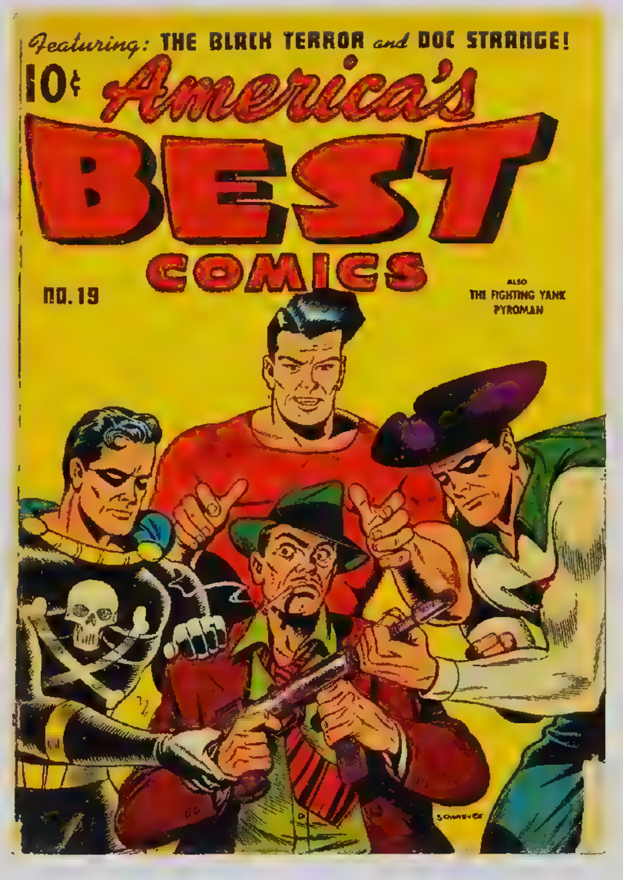
The Black Terror was really pharmacist Bob Benton, who concocted chemicals he called "formic ethers," which endowed him with superhuman strength and rendered him bulletproof. Benton used the ethers to give the same powers to his assistant and sidekick, Tim. Together they became the costumed crime fighting team known as the Terror Twins, who also battled Nazis and Japanese agents during World War II.

As his name, and his skull and crossbones insignia suggest, the Black Terror was a more violent type of superhero, who would sometimes kill his adversaries in combat. At times he was even depicted firing machine guns at his foes.

Standard continued to publish the Black Terror's adventures until 1949; the company went out of business in 1956. But this was far from the end for the Black Terror. He and other Standard superheroes entered the public domain, and as a result numerous comics companies and creators have since done their own versions of the Black Terror, including: AC Comics, who called him the Terror, and later the Terrorist; writer Roy Thomas, in his 1986 *Alter Ego* comics series, who renamed him the Holy Terror; and Eclipse Comics, which published a 1989 *Black Terror* miniseries.

In *Tom Strong* #11 (January 2001), published by Wildstorm in its America's Best Comics line, British author Alan Moore introduced Terra Obscura, an alternate Earth on which many Standard Comics heroes lived, including the Fighting Yank, Miss Masque, Pyroman, and the Woman in Red. Terra Obscura's version of the Black Terror was killed, but had transferred his consciousness into a computer called Terror 2000.

Jim Krueger and artist Alex Ross co-plotted *Project Superpowers,* a series published by Dynamite Entertainment that revived numerous public domain superheroes; the first issue was cover-dated January 2008. Besides the Black Terror, *Project Superpowers* also included the Fighting Yank, Miss Masque (now named Masquerade), and Pyroman (from Standard); the Golden Age Daredevil, renamed the Death-Defying 'Devil (from Lev Gleason Publications), the Green Lama (from Crestwood); the Arrow, the first superhero archer (from Centaur); the Flame, created by Will Eisner and Lou Fine (from Fox); and the android Dynamic Man (from Dynamic Publications). The Black Terror was the first *Project Superpowers* character to receive his own miniseries, published by Dynamite in 2008.


Featuring: THE BLACK TERROR and DOC STRANGE!
10¢
America's
BEST
COMICS
NO.19
ALSO THE FIGHTING YANK PYROMAN
SCHOMBURG

America's Best Comics #19 © 1946 Standard Comics. (Cover art by Alex Schomburg.)

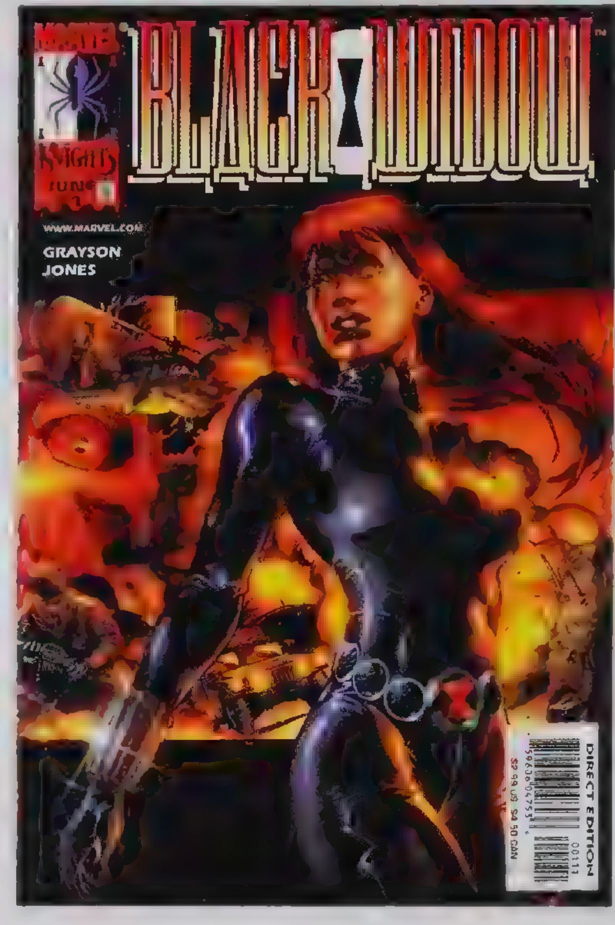
Another Golden Age forerunner of the Punisher (and character similar to the Black Terror) is the Destroyer, who likewise uses a skull as his chest insignia, and debuted in *Mystic Comics* #6 (October 1941), published by Timely Comics, the company now known as Marvel. The Destroyer was the first superhero co-created by writer Stan Lee, and was his most successful superhero co-creation before the Fantastic Four. In his origin story, American reporter Keen Marlow is imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, where prisoner Professor Eric Schmidt gives him a "super-soldier" serum that amplifies Marlow's physical abilities. Schmidt is killed, but Marlow escapes and becomes the costumed Destroyer, who wages a ruthless one-man war on the Nazis behind enemy lines, to free the people they have subjugated. In his 1970s series *The Invaders* Roy Thomas cast two new characters, Brian Falsworth and Roger Aubrey, as the Destroyer.

Marvel re-established Marlow as the original Destroyer, starring him in the *USA Comics 70th Anniversary Special* (2009), in a story by John Arcudi that reveals that the stripes on the Destroyer's costume allude to the striped uniforms worn by captives in Nazi concentration camps. —*PS*

Black Widow

From her introduction as a superheroine in *Tales of Suspense* #52 in 1964, the Black Widow (created by the writer/artist team of Stan Lee and Don Heck) has been an almost constant presence across a dizzying array of Marvel Comics titles. Equal parts superhero and superspy, and the first communist heroine to appear in comics, the Black Widow is Marvel's longest lived solo heroine. In her first appearance, battling Iron Man, she was simply Natasha Romanoff (her actual Russian last name is Romanova), a Soviet spy sent on an industrial espionage mission to Stark Industries—wearing an inconspicuous veil and figure-hugging cocktail dress combination. A few issues later she was back with an embittered young circus performer, the archer Hawkeye, whom she persuaded to battle Iron Man, but he soon saw the error of his ways and joined the Avengers. Inspired by his example, she denounced her cold war masters and defected to the West, donning a black-and-gray fishnet costume and signing up as a member of S.H.I.E.L.D. (Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law-Enforcement Division), Marvel's all-purpose secret intelligence agency.

Throughout much of the 1960s, the Widow was a regular guest of the Avengers, alternately joining in their adventures and pining for Hawkeye. In *The Avengers* #43, her past was fleshed out in more detail; she had been orphaned during World War II and was brought up by the grizzled mountain man, Ivan Petrovich. She later married the Soviet superhero the Red Guardian, but on his "death" she joined the KGB and was trained to become their top operative. In that same issue editors revealed that the Red Guardian had been alive all along, but in the following issue's melée he was killed anyway. Following several rebuffed attempts to join the Avengers, she abandoned her efforts (for the next twenty years, at any rate) and struck out on her own, determined to be a solo adventuress.



Black Widow #1 © 1999 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by J.G. Jones.)

Readers next met the Black Widow in *Amazing Spider-Man* #86 (1970), sporting a revamped all-in-one, black leather catsuit and armed with all-purpose "wristshooter" wristbands (incorporating a "widow's line" wire for swinging, tear-gas pellets, and "widow's bite" electric stinger), transforming her into a groovy late 1960s heroine à la Emma Peel of TV's *The Avengers*. This appearance was immediately followed by the Widow's first solo series, a co-headlining slot (shared with the Inhumans) in *Amazing Adventures,* which revealed a new jet-setting Natasha Romanoff, complete with penthouse pad, chauffeur (Ivan), maid, and swinging parties with playboys, princes, and Jackie O. The strips were sharp, hip, and beautifully drawn by Gene Colan (among others). They pitted the Widow against slum lords, the mob, and hippie cults. However, the split-book innovation failed to win a large enough readership, and the Inhumans were granted sole ownership of the title with issue #9. Undeterred by this setback, Romanoff jumped ship to *Daredevil,* without missing a month, and there she stayed for four years, even sharing cover billing for a while.

Daredevil and the Black Widow were a good combination: two sleek, elegant figures swinging gracefully through the night sky of San Francisco (this period of the comic is fondly remembered for its sophistication). Following a change of writer, Romanoff was written out of the comic and straight into another, one of the era's less memorable teams, *The Champions* (running for seventeen issues from 1975 to 1978). Former X-Men Iceman and the Angel put the Champions together, which also included Hercules and Ghost Rider, in addition to the Black Widow—a more unlikely group of superheroes would be hard to find. Following the group's inevitable break-up, the Widow appeared to go on a tour of Marvel's entire line, including *The Avengers* and *Daredevil* (again), *Marvel Two in One* and *Marvel Team-up,* as well as a couple of well-executed solo strips in *Bizarre Adventures* #25 (1981) and *Marvel Fanfare* #10–#13 (1983), which emphasized her spying past.

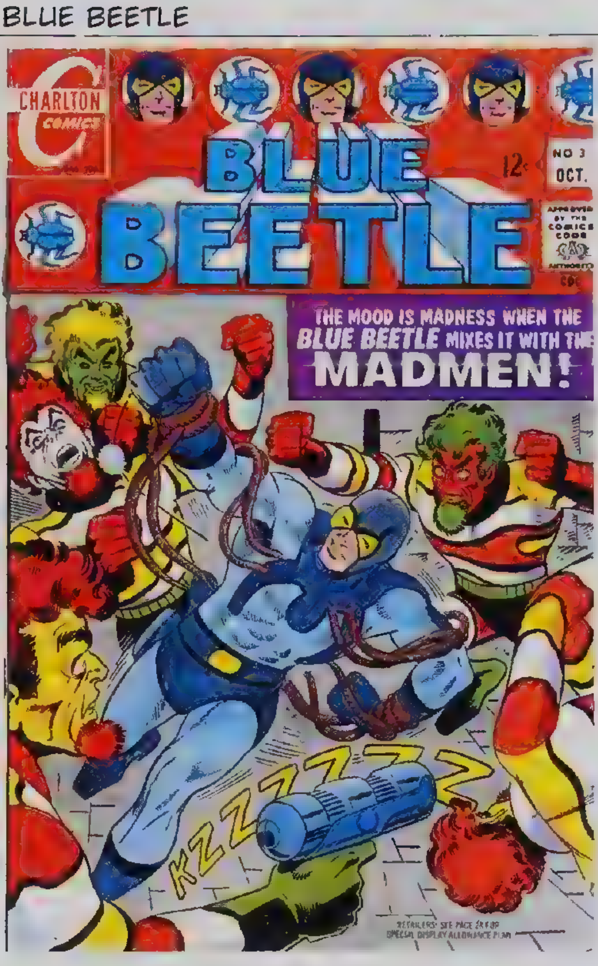
A further guest slot in *Daredevil* (issue #187, 1983), under the aegis of *enfant terrible* Frank Miller, led to a harsh, 1980s-style makeover, replacing the Widow's flowing locks with a spiky buzz-cut, and sacrificing her hipster belt and groovy bracelets for a gray leotard. If the ensuing decade was a relatively fallow one, then the 1990s proved spectacularly successful, initially through a lengthy run in *The Avengers*—a team she was finally allowed to join and eventually lead. Her increased visibility as an Avenger cemented her place in the Marvel hierarchy, resulting in appearances in numerous titles, including *Forceworks* and *Captain America,* though a little of her unique background was sacrificed in the process. In 1996, the Avengers were literally spirited away to another realm, leaving the Black Widow holding the fort alone and, notwithstanding guest appearances in the new (volume 3) *Avengers* title, the end of the decade was to be one of unprecedented solo success.

Having returned to the glamour and sex-appeal of her 1970s costume, the Black Widow made the biggest splash of her career with an immensely popular 1999 miniseries by writer Devin Grayson and artist J. G. Jones. The story placed the Widow in the shady world of international espionage, and introduced her blonde Russian counterpart Yelena Belova, a new Black Widow. The combination of Romanoff's doubts over her age and abilities, an arch-enemy worthy of the name, a succession of exciting action set-pieces, and Jones' beautiful artwork (which made him an instant star) was dynamite. Further miniseries followed, as well as appearances in the *Marvel Knights* superteam series and (in only slightly modified form) the popular parallel-universe Avengers comic *The Ultimates,* confirming that the Black Widow's time had finally come. A new *Black Widow* comic book was launched in 2010; Scarlett Johansson plays the Black Widow in the films *Iron Man 2* (2010) and *The Avengers* (2012).

Marvel's first Black Widow, who debuted in *Mystic Comics* #4 (August 1940), was Claire Voyant, a woman with supernatural powers who could kill a victim merely by touching his flesh. She hunted down and killed evildoers to send them to her master, the Devil, in hell. This Golden Age Black Widow returned in Marvel's 2008 series *The Twelve.* —*DAR & PS*

Blue Beetle

The Blue Beetle was the second superhero to have his own comic, and went on to more changes and publishers (six in all) than almost any other character in comics history. He also spanned the quality spectrum from excellent to absolutely awful. In 1939, Victor Fox was an ac-


CHARLTON COMICS
BLUE BEETLE
12¢
NO 3 OCT.
THE MOOD IS MADNESS WHEN THE BLUE BEETLE MIXES IT WITH THE MADMEN!
KZZZZZZZ

Blue Beetle #3 © 1967 Charlton Comics. (Cover art by Steve Ditko.)

countant at DC Comics who had noticed with envy the profits coming in from the company's new Superman character. Moving to a different floor in the same building, he set up his own company, Fox Comics, and hired the Will Eisner/Jerry Iger creative shop to provide the story and artwork for his new venture. Unfortunately, their first character, Wonder Man, was immediately hit by a lawsuit from DC, and so they quickly dreamed up a new hero, the Blue Beetle. In his first appearance (drawn by Charles Nicholas in *Mystery Men Comics* #1), the Beetle was little more than a Green Hornet clone, but he was soon given a blue chain mail costume with a mask and hood topped off with antennae; the latter sadly disappeared by his fourth strip.

In his civilian identity, the Beetle was rookie cop Dan Garret, whose athletic prowess made him a powerful hero as soon as he donned his costume—though the gun he toted in the early days probably helped. As far as superpowers go, he really had none, although he often projected his beetle insignia on dark walls. Soon he was given a girlfriend, reporter Joan Mason, and a special vitamin mixture (2X) that beefed up his muscles. The Blue Beetle briefly had his own radio show and newspaper strip, but the poor overall quality of Fox's product led the company to close shop in 1942. A few months later, the Beetle was back on the stands, this time published by Fox's printers, Holyoke, who (historians believe) took over the character in lieu of debts. The Holyoke years saw the character gain a sidekick called Spunky, which didn't help, as the strip got even worse. By 1944, Victor Fox had come back into publishing and took over the comic again for a series of catastrophically awful strips in which the Beetle could suddenly fly, and also mysteriously acquired the Beetlemobile and the Beetleboat.

One of the hottest comics of the postwar years was the ultraviolent *Crime Does Not Pay,* and in 1946 Fox decided to get a piece of that action. This new direction concentrated more on the Blue Beetle's shapely girlfriend, and featured a series of so-called "true crime stories," which were little more than an excuse for acres of flesh and gallons of blood. Story titles such as "Satan's Circus," "The Vanishing Nude," and "House of a Thousand Corpses" tell it all. By the end of the decade, Fox had left comics forever, but the Beetle was soon picked up by bargain-basement publisher Charlton, who brought out a few nondescript issues in 1955. Somehow, I.W. Comics got their hands on some old artwork and, in 1964, released it in two issues inexplicably retitled *The Human Fly.* That same year, Charlton was back again with a ten-issue run of staggeringly silly strips in which the beefed-up hero appeared to resemble the Pillsbury Doughboy.

Then something strange happened: The Blue Beetle finally starred in some good stories—very good stories, in fact. Soon after leaving his astonishingly successful *Spider-Man* comic, artist Steve Ditko moved over to Charlton and completely revamped the Beetle. Ditko's hero was now scientist Ted Kord and he had a stylish new costume, his own designer flying vehicle (in the shape of a beetle, of course), and genuinely exciting, well-drawn stories. Inexplicably, despite action scenes that rivaled Spider-Man at its best, the public simply wasn't interested, and the comic was canceled after barely a year. (The Ted Kord Blue Beetle was eventually murdered by his former ally, businessman Maxwell Lord, in *Countdown to Infinite Crisis* #1 [May 2005]).

A generation later, the few fans who bought Ditko's issues were creating comics of their own, and the first of many revivals saw print in 1981 in the semi-pro Charlton *Bullseye*. A few years later, another fan publication, *Americomics*, pitted the two Blue Beetles against each other in pitched battle, before things came full circle and DC Comics (the impetus for the Beetle's creation in the first place) bought the rights to the character. For much of the 1980s, he starred in amiable yarns in his own comic and enjoyed great success in one of several incarnations of the Justice League. He was frequently teamed with his best friend in the League, Booster Gold, the time-traveling hero from the twenty-fifth century, who was created by Dan Jurgens in *Booster Gold* #1 (February 1986).

Jaime Reyes, a Latino teenager who first appeared in *Infinite Crisis* #3 (Feb. 2006), found the magical blue beetle scarab, which transformed him into the third Blue Beetle two issues later. The new Blue Beetle starred in his own comic (from 2006–2008) and in a backup feature in *Booster Gold* (starting in 2009). He has also joined the Teen Titans. DC launched a new *Blue Beetle* comic, starring the Jaime Reyes version, written by Tony Bedard with art by Ig Guara and Ruy Jose, in September 2011.

The third Blue Beetle has appeared in numerous episodes of the animated television series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. The new Blue Beetle also appeared in the live action *Smallville* series in the same episode as Booster Gold and Ted Kord. —*DAR & PS*

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Mix in equal parts sardonic humor, martial arts action, attractive cast members, monsters as metaphor, doomed romance, and feminism. Heat for seven years. Serve garnished with a stake through the undead heart, and you have the main course that was *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Created by Joss Whedon, the title heroine was first seen in a 1992 feature film of the same name, embodied by Kristy Swanson. Buffy was a popular cheerleader who discovered she was part of a historical line chosen to fight vampires and other spawns of evil. Trained under the eye of a Watcher (Donald Sutherland), Swanson still found time to romance bad boy Pike (Luke Perry), even as she faced down the twin perils of the school dance and the vampiric overlord Lothos (Rutger Hauer). The movie was not much of a hit, but Whedon wasn't quite willing to let his brainchild stay in the dark forever.

In March 1997, a new *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* debuted on the WB network as a limited-run series. This time, Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar) had moved to Sunnydale with her divorced mother, Joyce (Kristine Sutherland), and tried to forget the past. That would be fine, except that Sunnydale is located on the Hellmouth, an evil portal that makes the California town a haven for vampires, demons, and other creepy things. It just so happens that the high school librarian is also a Watcher named Rupert Giles (Anthony Stewart Head), and he is as stuffy as any British librarian ever committed to celluloid. As she begins to face the terrors of school, Buffy also fights monsters ranging from demon teachers to invisible girls to the Master (Mark Metcalf), a powerful vampire. It's a good thing that her Slayer powers give her immense strength, fighting skills, and healing factors, because Buffy's battles are just beginning.

Luckily, Buffy has friends to help her. Xander Harris (Nicholas Brendon) is a good-natured nerd who is helpful despite his unfortunate crushes on women who turn out to be evil. Willow Rosenberg (Alyson Hannigan) is a brilliant computer geek with a penchant for magic and shyness. Rounding out the group of sidekicks is Cordelia Chase (Charisma Carpenter), a bitchy fashion-plate who resents helping the geeks, but is drawn into the good fight time and again. When not in the graveyard or alleys fighting ghouls, the group mostly hangs out at the underage nightclub the Bronze, where live music—and the occasional fracas against the undead—are a staple. By the end of the first mini-season, *Buffy* had established itself as a ratings hit and a critical darling. Even as hundreds of websites sprang into life on the Internet, work began on a second season.

Throughout her tenure on the show, Buffy is portrayed as an archetypal heroine with a less-than-archetypal personality. Though she has no costume, she has a distinct alter ego as a student and daughter, as well as a heroic identity as a Slayer (the name most of the monsters call her). And while her Slayer's mission is to defeat vampires specifically, and evil generally, she uses her superpowers to make sure that her mission as a teenager—shopping, dating, hanging out with friends—is protected. While her secret is unknown to her mother initially, it eventually becomes evident to most of Sunnydale High's student body that Buffy is their protector (they eventually honor her as such at the senior prom in season three).

The first year had introduced into the mix a character named Angel (David Boreanaz), a brooding black-clad loner who was really a vampire "cursed" with a soul. As season two began, Angel was both aiding Buffy and falling in love with her. Complications arose when they slept together, and his moment of true happiness forced Angel to revert to his evil vampiric self. Angel killed Giles' girlfriend, Jenny Calendar (Robia LaMorte), showing that even series semi-regulars were not immune from sudden death. Even as Buffy and the so-called "Scooby Gang" tried to cope with Angel's bad side, they also faced fellow vamps Spike (James Marsters) and Drusilla (Juliet Landau), whose past intertwined with Angel's in the 1800s. Luckily, the heroes were regularly aided by Oz (Seth Green), a sarcastic teen rock-and-roller who was also a werewolf, as well as Willow's love interest.

Season three (1998–1999) featured the redemption of Angel, even as the town's demonic Mayor Wilkins (Harry Groener) planned to sacrifice Buffy's senior class of Sunnydale High in a bid to gain ultimate power. To do this, Wilkins seduced new Vampire Slayer Faith (Eliza Dushku) to the dark side. Faith was an anomaly; although usually only one Slayer was "called" per generation, a brief death (and resurrection) for Buffy in season one had resulted in another being called. Slayer vs. Slayer was soon set into motion, but as the season ended, controversy erupted. An episode about a teen bringing a gun to school—and the season finale about the mayor attacking the graduation ceremonies—were delayed in airing, following the Columbine school shootings.

The following year featured the cast relocating to college, while Angel, Cordelia, and Faith's Watcher Wesley Wyndham-Pryce (Alexis Denisof) relocated to a spin-off series called *Angel*. Buffy found the balance of classes and creature-fighting difficult, especially once she began to fall for muscular stud Riley Finn (Marc Blucas). Too bad then that Riley was part of a secret government group the Initiative, which was capturing and studying monsters in laboratories underneath the university! Once Riley and Buffy found out each others' secret identities, they helped each other in battle, especially against Frankenstein-like creation Adam (George Hertzberg). Also notable this season were the additions of the characters Anya (Emma Caulfield), a whiny ex-vengeance demon falling for Xander, and Tara (Amber Benson), a shy lesbian witch, whose interaction with the magic-wielding Willow would intensify over time. One episode written and directed by Whedon—"Hush"—was mostly shot in silence, and earned the series one of its few Emmy Award nominations. By now the public and the critics alike were aware that Emmy board was not going to reward *Buffy* no matter how good it was, but at least the show won in both ratings and sales of licensed merchandise, including an ongoing Dark Horse comic-book series and spin-offs, tie-in books, calendars, apparel, action figures, and Christmas ornaments.

In its fifth season (2000–2001), *Buffy* introduced a bizarre new wrinkle with younger sister Dawn Summers (Michelle Trachtenberg), whom everyone seemed to remember, even though viewers had never seen her before. As the season-long story arc progressed, the secret of Dawn's existence played in heavily to the evil plans of sexy villainess Glory (Clare Kramer). Relationships progressed as well: after Riley leaves, Buffy and

The cast of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* with Sarah Michelle Gellar in the title role (20th Century-Fox Television / The Kobal Collection / Sorenson, James)

Spike began a dangerous romance (he now had a microchip in his head stopping him from harming humans, so he joined the fight against evil); Willow and Tara became an openly lesbian couple; and Xander and Anya planned marriage. But the show's most shocking moment came when Buffy returned home to find her mother dead. In the season's ender, Buffy would sacrifice herself to save the world from Glory's machinations.

Moving from WB to UPN after contract renegotiations, *Buffy's* darkest and most controversial year was in 2001–2002, wherein everything good began to go bad. Willow's dark magic resurrected Buffy, but her friend was less than grateful to be pulled from heaven back to hell on Earth. Buffy and Spike's relationship grew ever more destructive. Three geeks—Jonathan (Danny Strong), Warren (Adam Busch), and Andrew (Tom Lenk)—planned to use their magical and scientific knowledge to become supervillains. The eventual result of their actions was the accidental death of Tara, a storyline that proved incredibly controversial in the press and on the Internet; Whedon and producer Marti Noxon spent much time defending themselves from charges of homophobia for killing one of the two lesbian characters. Another episode, written and directed by Whedon, was a musical, with the entire cast singing and dancing under the spell of a demon. The season ended with "Dark Willow" having a black-magic meltdown that threatened all of the cast, and left one villain flayed alive!

The 2002–2003 season of *Buffy* was announced as its final one, and with rising costs, declining ratings, and series star Gellar chafing to move on to other projects, this announcement surprised few. The producers moved to lighten the mood, establishing a newly rebuilt Sunnydale High, a soul for Spike, and the return of Rupert Giles to semi-regular duty after his time away from the series. But Buffy and the Scooby Gang's troubles were not over, with an indestructible nasty preacher named Caleb (Nathan Fillion), a horde of superstrong über-vampires, and the First Evil threatening apocalypse. "Potential" Slayers began arriving in Sunnydale to train, so in case Buffy fell in battle, they could move into her place. The series ended with the destruction of the Hellmouth and Sunnydale, but also a gift from Buffy to the world; the potential in girls everywhere was magically heightened, implying that every girl could be tough and strong like the Slayers.

Throughout its seven years, *Buffy's* strength lay partially in clever plots that used the evils and monsters as metaphors for problems faced by the characters—and implicitly, the viewers. The dialogue and direction of the series were almost always top-notch, the "girl power" message was both constant and consistent, and the actors were likable and believable in their roles. *Buffy* became a cottage industry for its stars, who would appear at conventions and parlay their popularity into further roles, once the series ended.

Spin-off series *Angel* continued on the WB, with Spike added as a series regular for its final season, from 2003 to 2004. A *Buffy* animated series was in development for more than a year, but despite extensive script-writing, voice work, and design, the show was not picked up by a network.

It was announced in 2009 that Fran Rubel Kuzui, the director of the original *Buffy* movie, and her husband Kaz Kuzui, were developing a new *Buffy* movie, "rebooting" the concept—without any involvement by Joss Whedon—to be distributed by Warner Bros.

However, starting in 2007, Dark Horse Comics began publishing *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season Eight,* Joss Whedon's continuation of the television show's continuity in comics form. Whedon himself wrote the first, fourth, and final story arcs for *Season Eight* and oversaw the work of other writers on the comic, including many veteran writers of the *Buffy* TV series. The *Season Eight* series ended with issue 40 in 2011. Whedon co-wrote a new *Season Nine* series that began in 2011; a *Season Ten* series will follow at a later date. Dark Horse also began publishing an *Angel and Faith* series, written by Christos Gage, in 2011. —*AM & PS*

Bulletman

Sensing that it had a hit on its hands with Captain Marvel, Fawcett Comics rushed out three other comics in early 1940, in order to capitalize on the superhero's success, but the company soon discovered that launching successful characters was not as easy as it thought. The three comics were: *Slam Bang,* starring a no-hoper called Diamond Jack; *Master Comics,* starring (appropriately enough) Master Man; and *Nickel Comics,* starring Bulletman. Fawcett soon realized that it was in trouble with these titles. *Nickel Comics* was half the price of other comics but only offered half the page count of its rivals (and, what's more, only gave the newsstand owners a tiny profit). *Master Comics* was launched as an oversized comic so that it would stand out from its competitors, but both it and *Slam Bang* were filled with second-rate strips that failed to excite their readers. So Fawcett decided to cut its losses and merged the three titles into *Master Comics,* with its seventh issue (October 1940). This version finally went on to enjoy the success that the publisher had hoped for, thanks to Bulletman and Captain Marvel Junior (a late arrival, in issue #22).

Bulletman's origin, recounted in *Nickel Comics* #1, details how Jim Barr attempts to join the police force after seeing his father—a cop—gunned down by gangsters. Vowing to carry on his father's crusade against crime, Barr becomes a scientist devoted to somehow "curing" the desire for crime. Sadly, years in the laboratory weaken him and, after the inevitable rejection by the police force, it seems as if Barr will have to settle for a career in the police labs. Instead, he works up a new concoction that magically increases his physical and mental abilities, creating an Adonis-like physique and vastly amplified intelligence. Armed with this new brainpower, he creates the Gravity Regulator Helmet, a bullet shaped, chrome headpiece that allows him to fly at great speed and also magnetically repels bullets away from him. Donning a red shirt, open to the waist, yellow tights, and boots, he now adapts his nickname "Bullet" Barr to become Bulletman. In addition to being able to fly, he also possesses telescopic vision.

Fawcett had a small army of second-division heroes, such as Spy Smasher, Ibis the Invincible, Minute Man, Mr. Scarlet and Pinky, Commando Yank, and Golden Arrow. While Bulletman never rose to the exalted status of Captain Marvel, he was probably the star act of these lesser-known characters. His principal writer was Fawcett's inventive workhorse Otto Binder, and with art from talents such as Jon Small, Mac Raboy, Dan Barry, Bill Ward, and Charles Sultan, the strip was an attractive feature. It came to life, in April 1941, with the introduction of Bulletgirl, created (in the fine tradition of Robin, Bucky, and other sidekicks) so that Bulletman would have someone to talk to and, of course, to add a little glamour to the feature. Bulletgirl was Susan Kent, the inquisitive daughter and secretary of Police Chief Kent; when she stumbles upon Barr's amazing alter ego, he bows to the inevitable, giving her a hit of his secret elixir and building a second bullet helmet for her. In 1944, the team was accompanied by Bulletboy and a dog called—you guessed it—Bulletdog, who flies thanks to the invention of an anti-gravity collar.

As the "Flying Detectives," Bulletman and Bulletgirl enjoyed a lengthy run in *Master Comics* (until issue #106, in 1949), and starred in sixteen issues of *Bulletman* (from 1941 to 1946), as well as appearing in *America's Greatest Comics*, *X-Mas Comics*, *Fawcett Miniatures*, and *Mighty Midget Comics*—a total of around 150 yarns in all. One of the first man-and-woman superhero duos, predating Hawkman and Hawkgirl, Flame and Flame Girl, and Lash Lightning and Lightning Girl, their adventures tended to be fast-moving tales with little room for introspection or characterization. These short stories were frequently peppered with bizarre and macabre foes, including Black Mask, Dr. Weird, Mr. Murder, the Gorgon, the Black Rat, the Invisible Man, and the Black Spider. Later adventures featured a one-off team-up with Captain Marvel Junior and Minute Man, as the Crime Crusaders Club. However, the strip's status was most convincingly shown with a visit from Captain Marvel himself during the lengthy fight with Captain Nazi in *Master Comics* #21 and #22.

With the cancellation of their feature in *Master Comics* #106, the pair faded from view. However, *Justice League of America* #135 (October 1976) re-introduced Bulletman and Bulletgirl, as denizens of the parallel world Earth-S, along with other Fawcett superheroes including Captain Marvel, the sorcerer Ibis the Invincible, Spy Smasher, and the team of Mr. Scarlet and Pinky. Writer/artist Jerry Ordway guest starred Bulletman and Bulletgirl in *The Power of Shazam* #8 in 1995.

Writer Grant Morrison co-created a new superheroine, Bulleteer, modeled after Bulletgirl, as a member of his new Seven Soldiers of Victory, in 2005. The series *Infinite Crisis* (2005–2006) reintroduced the DC Multiverse, including Earth-S with its own versions of Bulletman and Bulletgirl; Bulletman and his archenemy, the Weeper, appeared in a 2011 episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold. —DAR & PS*

Camp and Comedy Heroes

The earliest costumed crime fighters of comics' Golden Age (1938–1954) were dreadfully somber, not surprising given America's bleak mood during the Great Depression and World War II. It was only a matter of time, however, before someone realized that the separation of heroes and humor was unnecessary.

THE RED TORNADO AND OTHERS

That someone was Sheldon Mayer. In 1940, Mayer created the Red Tornado (not to be confused with the solemn android character of the same name who appeared decades later), who was introduced as a supporting-cast member in the "Scribbly" series in DC's *All-American Comics*. The Red Tornado bore a rather surprising distinction: He was secretly a *she*. Husky Ma Hunkel righted wrongs in a cobbled-together guise of red long johns, a towel as a cape, and a helmet that was once a cooking pot.

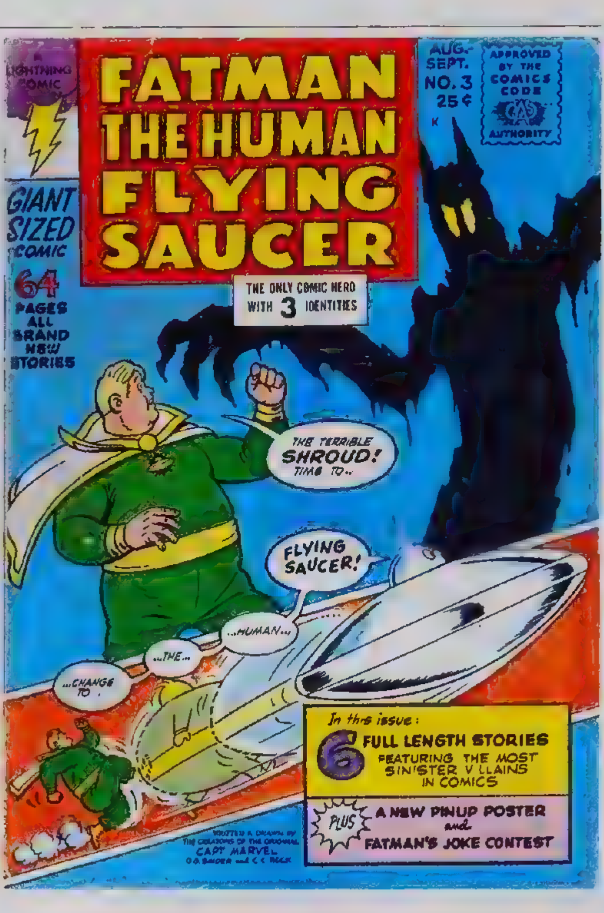
George Marcoux's *Supersnipe*, "The Boy with the Most Comic Books in America," was published by Street & Smith from 1942 through 1949. Supersnipe was actually shrimpy Koppy McFad, a kid so thoroughly obsessed with superheroes he pretended to be one himself. Hopping into red long underwear and sporting a mask and blue cape, this neighborhood protector imagined himself a strapping muscleman. *Supersnipe* was also the first comic book to deal with comics themselves as subject matter.

The year 1942 marked the debut of funny animal superheroes. Terrytoons' Mighty Mouse and Marvel (then known as Timely) Comics' Supermouse were the first big cheeses, soon joined by Fawcett's Hoppy the Marvel Bunny (Captain Marvel as a rabbit), and Marvel's copycat Super Rabbit, plus DC's Terrific Whatzit (a takeoff of the Flash in the unlikely form of a superfast turtle).

In 1947 Superman's creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster introduced Funnyman, a Danny Kaye-inspired TV comedian named Larry Davis who fought crime in a clown suit. *Funnyman*, who appeared in a comic book and a syndicated newspaper strip, laughed his last in 1949.

Without the war effort to sustain their adventures, most superheroes disappeared from the comics stands during the late 1940s, their titles replaced by a host of other genres, including humor. In the 1950s *MAD* skewered a handful of superheroes in send-ups including "Superduperman," "Plastic Sam," "Bat Boy and Rubin," and "Woman Wonder." Also premiering in the 1950s were Charlton Comics' *Atomic Mouse* and its spinoffs, and the Super Turtle half-page fillers that ran in a host of DC Comics titles.

Two significant comedic superheroes premiered in the 1950s. The first was the Fighting American, Prize Comics' patriotic hero from writer Joe Simon and artist Jack Kirby. *Fighting American* is acknowledged by many comics historians as the first superhero satire: Its target was obvious—Marvel's Captain America, whom Simon and Kirby themselves created in 1941—and its tone was irreverent, with Communist menaces like Poison Ivan and Hotsky Trotsky plaguing the flag-clad hero and his boisterous sidekick Speedboy. The second significant 1950s spoof was Herbie Popnecker, an improbable superhero first seen in ACG's *Forbidden Worlds* #73 (1958). The creation of writer Richard E. Hughes (using the pen name Shane O'Shea) and artist Ogden Whitney, Herbie was comically corpulent, hopelessly boring, and universally disliked. Herbie had one thing going for him: secret superpowers.


A LIGHTNING COMIC
FATMAN THE HUMAN FLYING SAUCER
AUG.-SEPT. NO. 3 25¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
GIANT SIZED COMIC
64 PAGES ALL BRAND NEW STORIES
THE ONLY COMIC HERO WITH 3 IDENTITIES
THE TERRIBLE SHROUD! TIME TO..
FLYING SAUCER!
..HUMAN..
..THE..
...CHANGE TO .
In this issue: 6 FULL LENGTH STORIES FEATURING THE MOST SINISTER VILLAINS IN COMICS
PLUS A NEW PINUP POSTER and FATMAN'S JOKE CONTEST
WRITTEN & DRAWN BY THE CREATORS OF THE ORIGINAL CAPT MARVEL O.O. BINDER and C.C. BECK

Fatman the Human Flying Saucer #3 © 1967 Lightning Comics. (Cover art by C.C. Beck.)

THE CAMP CRAZE

There was no decade with more superhero parodies and comedy crime fighters than the 1960s.

No DC Comics superhero parody is better remembered than the Inferior Five, first seen in *Showcase* #62 (1966), a quintet of second-generation superheroes—Merryman, Awkwardman, Dumb Bunny, White Feather, and the Blimp.

DC wasn't alone in the comedy hero game. From 1966 to 1967, the teens of Archie Comics' Riverdale would temporarily gain superpowers—just long enough to ride the wave of superhero popularity—in the farcical *Archie as Pureheart the Powerful* (with Reggie as Evilheart) and *Jughead as Captain Hero*. In 1967, writer Otto Binder and artist C. C. Beck, renowned for their Golden Age work on *Captain Marvel Adventures*, created *Fatman, The Human Flying Saucer* for Lightning Comics. Walt Disney's Goofy sported red long johns and gulped "super goobers" (which were, in actuality, peanuts) to gain superpowers in Gold Key Comics' long-running *Super Goof*. Cartoonist Gilbert Sheldon's Wonder Warthog appeared throughout the 1960s in a series of underground comics, and even Harvey Comics tried its hand at superhero parody, in 1969, with *Fruitman*.

MAD lampooned TV's *Batman* as "Bats-Man" in its *Special Summer 'Camp' Issue*, #105 (1966). The following year *MAD* also offered its own original superhero, Captain Klutz, in an all-new paperback from Signet Books, *The MAD Adventures of Captain Klutz*. Illustrated by Don Martin, Captain Klutz, secretly Ringo Fonebone, wore red long underwear and became a crime fighter after reading too many comic books left him unable to do anything else.

Marvel Comics premiered its *MAD*-like *Not Brand Echh* title in 1967, poking fun at its "Marble" Comics characters (some examples: the Mighty Thor was the "Mighty Sore," and the Silver Surfer, the "Silver Burper"), pop culture, and its "Distinguished Competition" (including a Superman burlesque called "Stupor-Man"). *Not Brand Echh* was also the home of Forbush-Man, yet another comedy hero in red flannel underwear—and, like the Red Tornado, he wore a pot over his head! Topps, the premier producer of bubble-gum trading cards, published a series of mini-comics in 1967 parodying popular comics superheroes; included in this madcap mix were *Fantastic Fear* ("The World's Greatest Scaredy-Cats"), *The Incredible Hunk* (son of the Jolly Green Giant), and *Jester's League of America* (the Justice League as practical jokers). These spoofs bear the design work of Art Spiegelman, later a Pulitzer Prize winner for the Holocaust fable *Maus*.

NOT AS GOOD AS REGULAR SUPERHEROES, BUT SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN YOU

In the early to mid-1970s *National Lampoon* magazine frequently spoofed comic books. Their best-remembered (and most controversial) superhero burlesque was Son- O'-God—Jesus as a superhero—divinely rendered by legendary *Batman* artist Neal Adams. *National Lampoon* also poked fun at Batman and other superheroes.

Bob Burden's eccentric *Flaming Carrot Comics*, first seen in 1979, featured a peculiar protagonist, brain-addled from reading too many comics (a recurring theme in these parodies, perhaps a cryptic warning to readers?), who wore swim flippers and a six-feet-tall carrot mask with a flaming top! Also that year, writer/artist Dave Sim introduced an emotionally disturbed costumed vigilante called the Cockroach into issue #11 of his epic-length comic-book series *Cerebus*. Over the years Sim has used the Cockroach to parody various superheroes, including Batman, Captain America, and Wolverine.

Other 1980s superspoofs include DC's *Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew*, a superteam of funny animals, and Marvel's *Peter Porker, The Spectacular Spider-Ham*, a kid-friendly concept with Spider Man as a cartoon pig. The biggest 1980s success among cartoon heroes was *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (*TMNT*), a black-and-white comic book by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, published by Mirage Press in 1984, that led to several animated television series and a live-action movie franchise.

Writer/artist Keith Giffen's Ambush Bug first popped up in *DC Comics Presents* #52 (1982). This wiry, green-clad, antenna-wearing fruitcake—whose real name is Irwin Schwab—was conceived as an irritant to Superman. Soon the Bug, who was enchanted by the idea that he existed "inside" a comic book, starred in a number of miniseries and specials.

In 1989, a second-string Marvel Comics character was revitalized with humor in *The Sensational She-Hulk*. by writer/artist John Byrne. She-Hulk, like Ambush Bug, acknowledged her existence inside her comic book reality, frequently breaking the "fourth wall" by addressing Byrne, usually in frustration over the ludicrous situations he placed her in.

Creator Jim Valentino's *normalman* enjoyed a twelve-issue run in 1984–1985, in a black-and-white series from publisher Aardvark-Vanaheim. normalman reversed the Superman legend by stranding its star—Norm, an average, nerdy guy—on Levram (read that name backwards), a planet exclusively populated with superheroes. Also in 1984, writer/artist Don Simpson skewered superhero mythology with his madcap origin of Megaton Man. Sent to Earth as the only survivor of his planet, Megaton Man was bombarded by "cataclysmic" radiation, reared by gifted kangaroos, gnawed by a radioactive frog, and empowered by "solider syrup." This ridiculously proportioned hero (gigantically broad shoulders tapering into a tiny waist) debuted in Kitchen Sink Press' *Megaton Man* #1 (1984) and appeared for a brief run, with one-shots and an online version (www.megatonman.com) following. Ben Edlund's *The Tick* appeared two years after Megaton Man's debut, spinning out of comic shop New England Comics' newsletter into his own series. An oafish powerhouse, the bulky Tick was paired with mousy Arthur, comics' only sidekick in a moth suit. The Tick has appeared on TV in an animated series (1994–1997) and a live-action show (2001).

Introduced in 1986 by writer Bob Rozakis and illustrated by Stephen DeStefano, *'Mazing Man*'s protagonist was a docile, diminutive mental patient who performed good deeds for his neighbors while wearing a gold helmet and a cape. Cartoonist Fred Hembeck made a name for himself in fanzines with his humor strips in which he portrayed himself interviewing familiar superheroes. Hembeck's work grew so popular that he did satiric comics for DC, Marvel, such as the *Fantastic Four Roast* (1982) and *Fred Hembeck Destroys the Marvel Universe* (1989).

Radioactive Man first appeared as a fictional superhero in comic books read by Bart Simpson on the long-running animated television series *The Simpsons*. In real life, Bongo Comics, a company co-founded by *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, has published actual *Radioactive Man* comics, beginning in 1993. Bart donned a superhero guise as "Bartman" in a 1991 TV episode of *The Simpsons*, and Bongo subsequently published *Bartman* comics stories. Another *Simpsons* character, Comic Book Guy (voiced by Hank Azaria), who owns a comic book store called The Android's Dungeon & Baseball Card shop, has become the archetype of the stereotypical comic book adult "fanboy."

COMEDY HEROES 2K

For decades *MAD* magazine and its chief competitor *CRACKED* have relentlessly ridiculed superhero TV shows, movies, and comic books (and their fans). In 2002 MAD Books published the trade paperback *MAD About Super Heroes*, compiling all of *MAD*'s superhero parodies up to that time, including "Don Martin Looks at the Hulk," "Stuporman ZZZ" (a *Superman III* takeoff), "$-Men" (a 2001 *X-Men* movie parody), and "What if Superman Were Raised by Jewish Parents?" In February 2004 the magazine convened some of the hottest talents in serious superhero art, from Frank Miller to Jim Lee, to illustrate "The League of Rejected Superheroes," the cover story of issue #438.

Comic books' content grew grimmer in the 1990s and the 2000s, with violent anti-heroes abounding, and superhero parodies largely drifted by the wayside. As a result, humor has become a subgenre in the comics medium, with small-press titles like Evan Dorkin's *Milk and Cheese*, Tony Millionaire's *The Adventures of Sock Monkey*, and Shannon Wheeler's *Too Much Coffee Man* earning loyal cult audiences.

William Katt played the title character in the TV series *The Greatest American Hero* (1981–1983) in which a goofy school teacher finds a supersuit and tries to fight crime (ABC / Kobal Collection.)

During this period, a few superhero series have featured appropriate satirical elements without being actual lampoons: Mike Allred's *Madman* and Arthur Adams' *Monkeyman and O'Brien*, for example. Another is the witty *Soulsearchers and Company*, which was co-created by acclaimed writer Peter David and co-plotter/editor Richard Howell, originally drawn by future star artist Amanda Conner, and debuted in 1993, published by the small indie company Claypool Comics.

While out-and-out superhero parodies may be rare, they do occasionally occur, in odd outings like: Mark Evanier and Sergio Aragones' *The Mighty Magnor* (1993–1994) for Malibu Comics, *Archie Meets the Punisher* (1994), an anomalous crossover between Archie and Marvel Comics' death-dealing vigilante; DC's *Sergio Aragones Destroys DC* and its chief competitor's *Sergio Aragones Massacres Marvel*, both by *MAD*'s Sergio Aragones, and both published in June 1996; Alan Moore's evil twin to early Marvel, *1963* (Image, 1993); DC Comics' comic-shop satire, *Fanboy*, by Mark Evanier and Sergio Aragones (1999); filmmaker Kevin Smith's Jay and Silent Bob as *Bluntman and Chronic*, from Oni Press

(1999); Image Comics' *The Pro* (2002), a super-prostitute among straight-laced *Justice League* send-ups, written by Garth Ennis, with art by Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti; Bongo Comics' *Heroes Anonymous* (2003–2004), a superhero self-help saga; the super-workplace farce *Capes* (Image, 2003); *The B Sides,* New Jersey's best—and only—superteam (Marvel, 2002); the irony-era Batman and Robin, "Hawk-Owl and Woody," of Marvel's *Ultimate Adventures* (2002–2004); and DC's *Bizarro Comics!* (2001), a 240-page hardcover featuring a host of avant garde cartoonists and their twisted takes on traditional DC superheroes. Whether or not the superhero parody and comedy heroes will survive in the future depends upon the audience's ability to laugh at the material, and by extension laugh at itself.

CAMP HEROES IN THE MEDIA

Batman became a campy caped crusader in producer William Dozier's live-action ABC series *Batman* (1966–1968), starring Adam West. *Batman* was an instant ratings smash, and inspired a theatrical movie in the summer of 1966, a bonanza of merchandising, and a national superhero craze. First out of the gate of media camp heroes were *Rat Pfink and Boo-Boo* (1966) and *The Wild World of Batwoman* (1966), two micro-budget live-action feature films that specifically made fun of *Batman.*

On January 9, 1967, one year after *Batman* debuted, NBC unveiled *Captain Nice* and CBS debuted *Mr. Terrific,* two half-hour camp superhero shows. Created by Buck Henry (co-creator of *Get Smart*), *Captain Nice* starred William Daniels as police chemist Carter Nash, who discovers Super Juice, an extract that gives him temporary superpowers. Wearing a red-white-and-blue outfit sewn by his mother, Captain Nice ineptly tries to stop thugs and villains, all while failing to notice the wily seductive nature of female co-worker Sgt. Candy Crane. Meanwhile, Mr. Terrific (not to be confused with DC Comics' superheroes of the same name) was really Stanley Beamish (Stephen Strimpell), a gas station attendant who could take super pills to gain powers for an hour, including the power of flight (if he flapped his arms). Beamish worked with the government agency "Bureau of Secret Projects," while wearing a silver lamé suit and goggles. *Captain Nice* lasted fifteen episodes, while *Mr. Terrific* limped on to sixteen shows total.

During the 1960s television was overrun with funny crime fighters. *Mighty Mouse* was joined on TV by other animated superhero series like *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse* (a Batman lampoon by the hero's creator Bob Kane), *The Mighty Heroes* (a fondly remembered super-spoof, light-years away from director Ralph Bakshi's edgy later work), *Atom Ant, Frankenstein Jr. and the Impossibles,* and *Underdog.*

While Saturday morning cartoons continued to include a wide range of humorous heroes throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, live-action counterparts were few, on television or in theaters. Some movies, like *Superchick* (1971), *Infra-Man* (1976), *Supersonic Man* (1978), *The Puma Man* (1980), and *Super Fuzz* (1980), were simply inept feature films that were only "campy" because their budgets could not have fed a small family for more than a week.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, other features attempted to update the formula, diluting the camp and injecting real comedy instead. In the cult classic film *The Projectionist* (1971), directed and written by Harry Hurwitz, a movie theater projectionist, played by Chuck McCann, has fantasies in which he becomes a superhero called Captain Flash. *Hero At Large* (1980) saw John Ritter portraying an actor slumming in the role of Captain Avenger to promote a film, until he actually performs heroic deeds while in costume and learns he likes it. Disney's *Condorman* (1981) followed a similar storyline, finding a cartoonist (played by later Broadway *Phantom of the Opera* star Michael Crawford) forced to become his supercharacter to help save a beautiful Russian spy. *The Return of Captain Invincible* (1983) offered Alan Arkin in the title role, as a hero who was famous in the 1940s but is now an alcoholic outcast. Can he redeem himself when the world needs him, fighting Mr. Midnight and enduring the musical song-and-dance interludes?

Saturday Night Live (*SNL*) sometimes ridiculed superheroes, including a late 1970s skit set at a party thrown by Lois Lane (guest host Margot Kidder, who played Lane in the four theatrical *Superman* movies from 1978 to 1987), with *SNL* cast members Bill Murray as Superman, Dan Aykroyd as a stocky Flash, and John Belushi as a boisterous Incredible Hulk. A few 1970s Saturday morning TV cartoons featured funny heroes, including *Dynomutt, Dog Wonder* (1976), a robotic superdog partnered with the Batman takeoff Blue Falcon.

Television once again saw the rise of a humorous live-action hero with *The Greatest American Hero* (1981–1983), in which a school teacher is given an alien supersuit to fight crime, but he loses the instruction booklet. A few years later, NBC debuted *Misfits of Science*, a funny hour-long show which found a group of superpowered young adults being gathered together to fight crime at the Humanidyne science institute. The group included a tall black man who could shrink (Kevin Peter Hall), a hipster who could shoot lightning from his hands (Mark Thomas Miller), a recurring character who could freeze things (Mickey Jones), and a girl with psychic powers (the breakout star of the series, Courtney Cox). After fifteen episodes garnered low ratings, NBC yanked the series.

Troma Studios debuted the feature film *The Toxic Avenger* in 1986. After a geek (Melvin Junko) is exposed to toxic waste, he is mutated into a monstrous superhero (Mitchell Cohen), who wears a burned tutu and wields a mop. A return to camp in a storytelling sense, *Toxic Avenger* had a low budget, but directors Michael Herz and Lloyd Kaufman made the most of everything they had. "Toxie" became a cult phenomenon, and sequels were made: *The Toxic Avenger, Part 2* (1989); *The Toxic Avenger, Part 3: The Last Temptation of Toxie* (1989); and *Citizen Toxie: The Toxic Avenger, Part 4* (2000). An animated TV series, *The Toxic Crusaders,* ran for thirteen episodes in 1991, and a spin-off film, *Sgt. Kabukiman N.Y.P.D.*, was released that same year. Fox-TV's *In Living Color* (1990–1994) featured a recurring superhero parody: the physically challenged champion Handi-Man, portrayed by Damon Wayans.

The 1990s saw the release of a handful of superhero comedy films that tried to make their camp qualities hip. *The Meteor Man* (1993) was written by, directed by, and starred Robert Townsend. Hit by a meteor, schoolteacher Townsend gains superpowers and tries to defend his neighborhood from the gang known as the Golden Lords. Because he is afraid of heights, Meteor Man flies only four feet off the ground, and wears costumes created by his mother. *Blankman* (1994), written and starring comedian Damon Wayans, attempted to be funnier by giving a nerd superpowered gadgets and a literal long-underwear costume (bullet-proof), accented with a cape made from his grandmother's bathrobe.

Several more recent films have been an odd mixture of camp, irony, and superhero deconstructionism. *Mystery Men* (1999) was based on Bob Burden's strange superheroes from the cult series *Flaming Carrot Comics*, published by Dark Horse Comics. Directed by Kinka Usher, the movie teamed a group of amateur, second-string heroes against a nemesis from their past. The all-star cast featured Ben Stiller as the very angry Mr. Furious, Janeane Garofalo as the second-generation heroine the Bowler, Hank Azaria as the silverware-wielding Blue Raja, Paul Reubens as the gas-filled Spleen, William H. Macy as the Shoveller, Kel Mitchell as the too-visible Invisible Boy, and Wes Studi as the inscrutable Sphinx, all working to stop Geoffrey Rush's Casanova Frankenstein and his goons from destroying Champion City.

The Specials (2000) followed a similar formula, though it went straight-to-video. The world's seventh best superhero team, the Specials is comprised of Power Chick (Kelly Coffield), Minute Man (James Gunn), and blue-skinned Amok (Jamie Kennedy). They must cope as action figure deals fall through, as well as the fallout when the Strobe (Thomas Haden Church) disbands the group after discovering that his wife, Ms. Indestructible (Paget Brewster), is having an affair with fellow hero the Weevil (Rob Lowe). Directed by Craig Maizen, the film was well received—by those few who saw it—for its smart dialogue and silly cast.

The Duo (2001) is a direct-to-video "mockumentary" in which a reporter (Marie Black) tries to make a film about two masked Texas twenty-somethings who think they're superheroes. Sure to maintain a higher profile is *The Incredibles*, a 2004 animated film from Pixar and Disney about a suburban superhero family.

Although the age of camp superheroes seems to be a thing of the past, making fun of the campy superhero concept is definitely part of the appeal of *Comic Book: The Movie*. Directed by and starring *Star Wars'* Mark Hamill, the direct-to-video film (2003) follows the travails of Donald Swann, #1 fan of popular 1940s hero Commander Courage, as he attempts to film a documentary at the San Diego Comic-Con International. Real-world comic book creators make cameos in the film, including Paul Dini, Peter David, Scott Shaw, and Mark Evanier.

The British situation comedy *My Hero,* which ran on the BBC from 2000 to 2006, was about Thermoman, a superhero from another planet, and his problems trying to adjust to normal human life in his secret identity of George Sunday. The series has been broadcast in the United States on public broadcasting stations and BBC America.

SpongeBob SquarePants, the title character of Nickelodeon's immensely popular animated series, is a devoted fan of superheroes Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy, who are now elderly and retired. Ernest Borgnine and Tim Conway provide the voices of the Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy in their old age, but in a time travel story, their younger selves were voiced by 1960s *Batman* TV stars Adam West and Burt Ward!

Part of Cartoon Network's "Adult Swim" since 2003, *The Venture Bros.* is an animated series with an enormous cult following that satirizes the action-adventure genre, including superhero sagas. The main characters, young Hank and Dean Venture, their scientist father Dr. Thaddeus "Rusty" Venture, and their bodyguard Brock Samson, are inspired by the main characters on Hanna-Barbera's 1960s adventure series *Jonny Quest*. However, many other recurring characters on the series are parodies of superheroes, such as Doctor Orpheus, a sorcerer who is a spoof of Doctor Strange, and the Impossibles, who are satirical versions of the Fantastic Four. *The Venture Bros.* is also full of supervillains, most notably Dr. Venture's self-styled archenemy, the Monarch, and his gravel-voiced wife Dr. Girlfriend. The series is masterminded by Jackson Publick (the pseudonym of Christopher McCulloch) and Eric "Doc" Hammer, who are the main writers and provide many of the characters' voices.

Amidst the torrent of new superhero movies in the twenty-first century, there have been several superhero comedy films as well. Disney's *Sky High* (2005), directed by Mike Mitchell, is about Sky High School, a school for teenage superheroes. The cast includes Lynda Carter, who played Wonder Woman on the 1970s television series, as Principal Powers; and Kurt Russell and Kelly Preston as a married pair of superheroes, the Commander and Jetstream.

In *My Super Ex-Girlfriend* (2006), directed by Ivan Reitman (of *Ghostbusters* fame), Uma Thurman plays Jenny Johnson, who is secretly the superheroine G Girl. After her boyfriend Matt (played by Luke Wilson) breaks up with her, the emotionally unstable Jenny uses her powers to take revenge on him.

David Zucker and Robert K. Weiss, who directed and produced the first two *The Naked Gun* comedy movies, were the producers of *Superhero Movie* (2008). Written and directed by Craig Mazin, *Superhero Movie* is primarily a spoof of the first *Spider-Man* movie, but also parodies Batman and the X-Men.

Saturday Night Live superhero spoofs have continued sporadically into the 2000s, with [the animated shorts *X-Presidents* (former U.S. presidents as superheroes) and *The Ambiguously Gay Duo* (voiced by Stephen Colbert and Steve Carell), among their number.

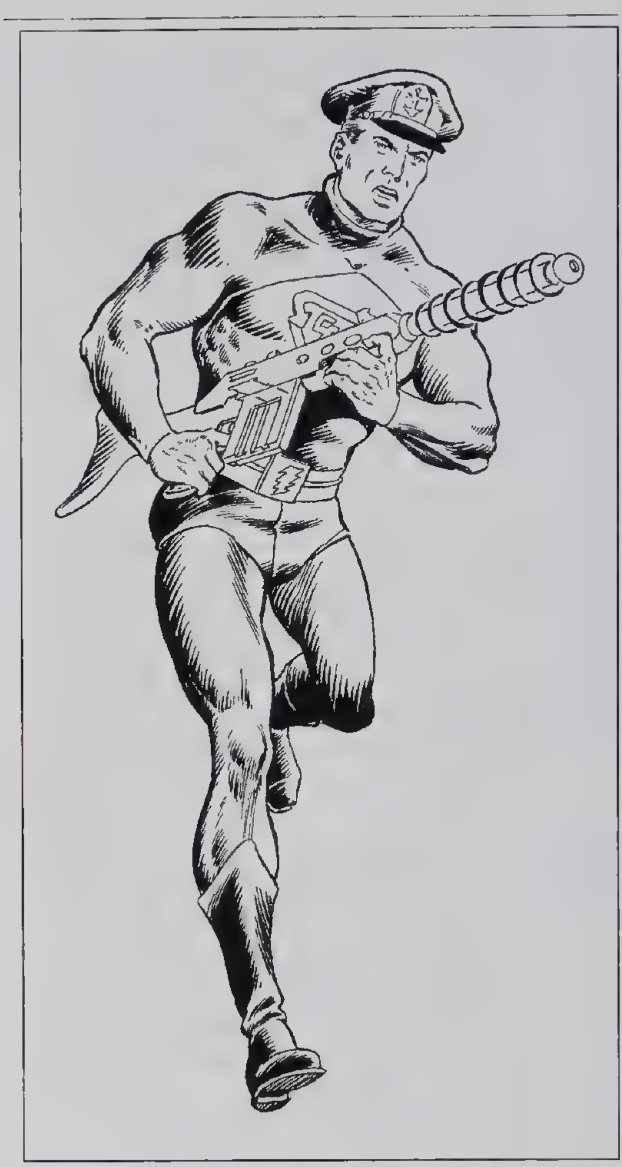
In the HBO comedy series *Bored to Death,* which premiered in 2009, one of the main characters, cartoonist Ray Hueston (played by Zach Galifianakis) creates a highly successful comic book superhero called Super Ray, who looks like an idealized version of himself. *Bored to Death*'s lead character, Jonathan Ames, and Ray Hueston are based on the real life Jonathan Ames, the writer who created the TV series, and his friend, comics artist Dean Haspiel, who designed the Super Ray character. The real Ames and Haspiel have collaborated on an actual one-shot *Super Ray* comic book, which can be downloaded from HBO's *Bored to Death* web site.

Two different animated movies in 2010 were superhero spoofs whose lead characters were supervillains who turn into heroes. Illumination Entertainment and Universal Studios produced *Despicable Me,* which centers on the supervillain Felonious Gru, voiced by Steve Carell. Dreamworks Animation produced *MegaMind,* whose supervillainous title character is voiced by Will Ferrell. Other major characters in the film include MegaMind's archenemy, the superhero Metro Man, voiced by Brad Pitt, and Roxanne Ritchie, a woman reporter in the Lois Lane tradition, voiced by Tina Fey. *—ME, AM & PS*

Captain Action

Captain Action, the original superhero action figure, owes his existence to Barbie. When Mattel premiered its dress-up doll in 1959, it also launched the "razor/razor blade" concept: marketing a host item (the "razor," or the Barbie doll), with supplemental accessories (the "razor blades," or Barbie's clothing). Barbie's rampant success inspired toy makers Stanley Weston and Larry Reiner to attempt a similar product for boys, the result being Hasbro's GI Joe, a generic military figure complemented by an escalating line of combat garb and gear. GI Joe so took the nation by storm in 1964 that Weston and Reiner repackaged their idea in a superhero context, knocking on the door of Reiner's employer, Ideal Toys. And so Captain Action, a twelve-inch superhero figure, with additional crime-fighting costumes (all sold separately), was launched in 1966.

The original line of Captain Action uniforms consisted of Superman, Batman, Aquaman, Captain America, Sgt. Fury, Flash Gordon, the Phantom, Steve Canyon, and the Lone Ranger, popular characters representing five different licensors, a concerted effort that seems impossible in today's competitive market. Solid sales, bolstered by a ubiquitous advertising campaign on television and in comic books, sparked an increase of product in 1967, including more costumes (with the popular Spider-Man joining the line, along with other heroes), play sets, and accessories, plus the sidekick Action Boy, also marketed with additional uniforms (Robin, Superboy, and Aqualad). Captain Action was merchandized outside of Ideal's figure line, with a card game, an inflatable swim ring, and a Halloween costume.



Captain Action (c. 1966) © ™ Karl Art Publishing, Inc. (Art by Murphy Anderson, inked in 2002 over unused 1966 pencils.)

Captain Action sales began to shrink in 1967, but not so much that Ideal abandoned the concept. In 1968, the company issued Captain Action and Action Boy in redesigned packaging and added a villain, the blue-skinned alien Dr. Evil (not to be confused with the character from the *Austin Powers* movies). DC Comics published five issues of a Captain Action comic book beginning in 1968, illustrated by Wally Wood and Gil Kane, marking the first toy-inspired comic book (over time, *Hot Wheels, The Micronauts, Rom: Spaceknight,* and others would follow, including, coincidentally, *Barbie* and *GI Joe*). Writer Jim Shooter, in *Captain Action* #1, created a true identity for Captain Action—Clive Arno (note the initials)—and provided him with a host of powers from coins imbued with the abilities of ancient gods. These efforts came too late: Captain Action toys and comics disappeared in 1969.

Yet Captain Action maintained a loyal collectors' audience. In 1995, Karl Art Publishing obtained the Captain Action copyright through the publication of a one-shot comic book. Playing Mantis, a producer of reissued baby-boomer toys, acquired the action-figure license in 1998. Captain Action and Dr. Evil reappeared, along with costumes of classic heroes and villains. Even Action Boy returned, renamed "Kid Action" due to copyright restrictions. But publishers DC and Marvel refused to grant licenses for their characters, and without the identifiable Batman, Spider-Man, and the like to support the line, Captain Action was canceled once again in 2000. While his two leases on life have failed to make him famous, Captain Action remains a nostalgic favorite, and a book celebrating his history, *Captain Action: The Original Super-Hero Action Figure,* was published in 2002.

As of 2005, Captain Action Enterprises controls the licensing rights to the character, and has been producing Captain Action toys, trading cards, statues, and other collectibles. Moonstone Books began publishing the new *Captain Action* comic book series in 2008. *—ME*

Captain America

Captain America may not be the first patriotic superhero—that title belongs to the Shield—but he is by far the most enduring and most widely recognized of those wrapped in the red, white, and blue. Probably more than any other character of the last sixty years, the good Captain has been rendered by artists and writers to reflect the mood of the nation. In March 1941, Captain America's creators, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, fashioned his origin after the simplicity of a prewar America: Having been rejected by the army, effete beanpole Steve Rogers volunteers to be a guinea pig for the government's top-secret super soldier serum. One injection from the brilliant Professor Reinstein and the pale army reject is transformed into the steel-jawed, muscle-rippling Captain America, complete with red-white-and-blue costume, winged mask, chain mail shirt, and stars-and-stripes shield. His mission is clear: "We shall call you Captain America, Son! Because like you—America shall gain the strength and will to safeguard our shores!" Reinstein gets shot and his Nazi assassins soon taste the swift, hard knuckles of the nation's newest hero. In due course, Rogers joins the army, acquires a kid sidekick—plucky regimental mascot Bucky Barnes—and embarks on a career of enthusiastic Nazi-bashing.

Simon and Kirby clearly established Captain America's identity from the very first issue they created for Marvel (then Timely) Comics, audaciously showing Cap landing a righteous haymaker on the Führer's chin—on the cover itself! Here was a hero who could protect the free world almost a year before the United States would even enter World War II; a war which the Jewish Simon and Kirby, more than most, likely suspected was inevitable. And if Cap was our hero, then Rogers represented every American soldier who would soon fight for his country. The early stories were simple, straightforward tales peopled with bizarre villains such as the Hunchback of Hollywood, the Black Toad, Ivan the Terrible, and assorted fifth columnists. Chief among the bad guys was the Red Skull, a seemingly invincible Nazi whose face literally was a crimson skull, and who would return again and again. As straightforward as all that derring-do was, it was also gripping, exciting, and fast-moving, and with Kirby's dramatic art the comic was one of the most widely read titles of the Golden Age era of comics (1938–1954).

From Captain America's beginning, audience identification and participation were central to his success. The first issue announced the creation of "The Sentinels of Liberty" Fan Club, which eager young fans could join for a modest dime, entitling them to a membership card and metal badge. The club proved so popular that the government pleaded with Marvel to wind it down; the badges were eating up too much precious metal, which could be better used in the imminent war. More significantly, in Bucky readers had a role model they could identify with: a boy much like themselves who bravely fought beside their idol with only his two sharp fists to defend himself. It wasn't long before he was given his own strip as leader of the Young Allies kid gang, who would be featured in more than forty stories in titles such as *Kid Komics* and *Marvel Mystery*, as well as in their own eponymous comic book.

By the time of Pearl Harbor, Captain America had become Marvel's top-selling title (at almost one million copies a month), and over the course of the war Cap and Bucky fought the Axis Powers on both fronts. After ten wonderful issues, the comic's creators were enticed away to rival company DC Comics, but their replacements—novice writer/editor Stan Lee and various artists including Syd Shores—handled things well in their absence. In 1943 the character received the honor of his own Republic Pictures serial, *The Adventures of Captain America*—confirmation (if any were needed) of his potent iconic status. Then, at the height of Cap's popularity, the war ended, which was disastrous for this super-patriotic character.

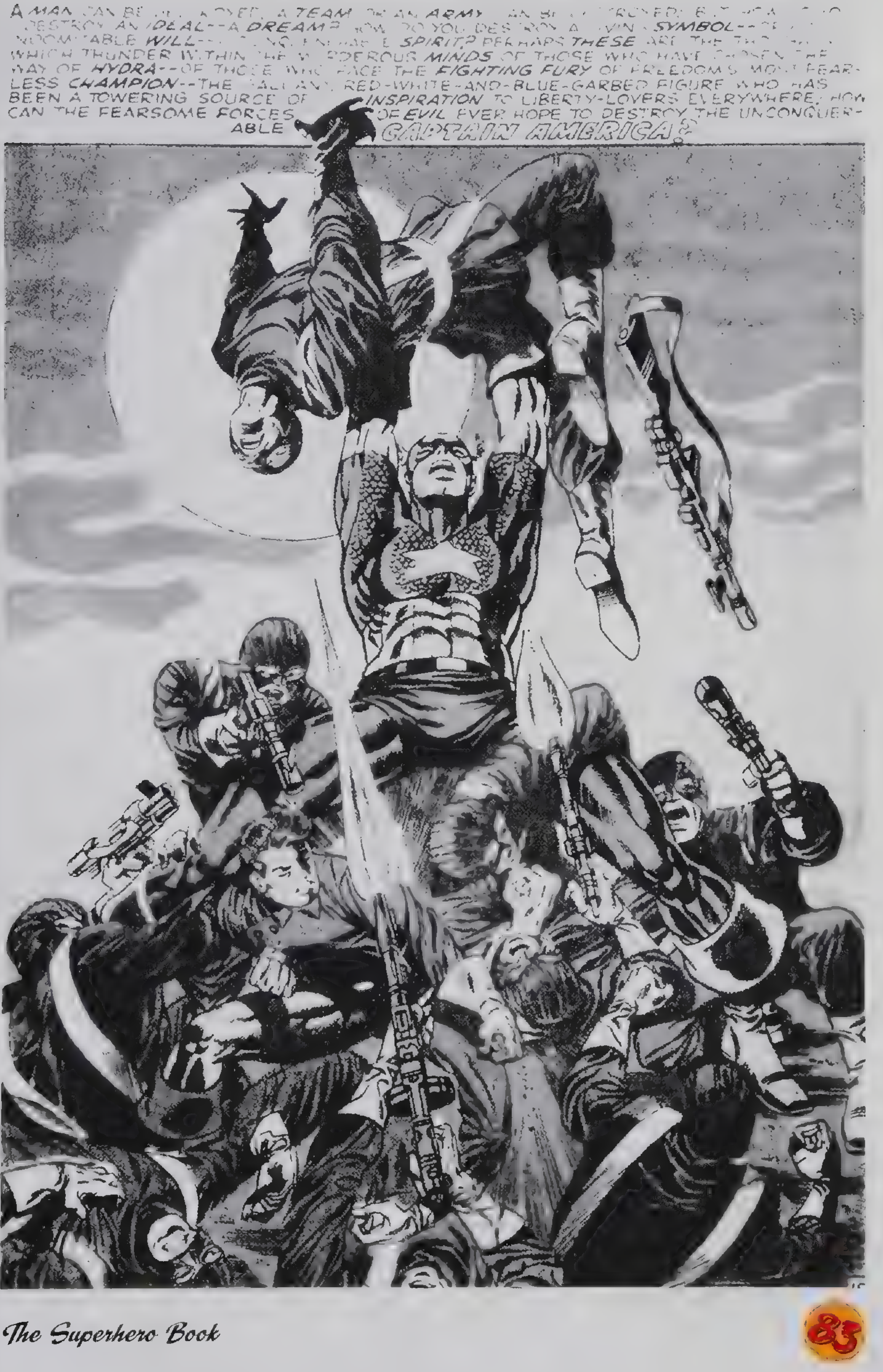
After military discharge, Cap and Bucky settled into life as teacher and pupil at a New York slum school, and took the good fight to home-grown mobsters, miscreants, and monsters. But while the country had embraced superheroes in wartime, peace brought an upsurge in crime, funny animal, Western, and romance comics—everything, in fact, except superheroes. In an effort to broaden their dwindling readership, Marvel stuck a conveniently wounded Bucky into the hospital and replaced him with Cap's longtime squeeze, Betty (or Betsy, depending on the writer's memory) Ross, a.k.a. Golden Girl. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the gun-toting, high-heeled, evening-gown-wearing Golden Girl failed to resonate with the stalwart Sentinels of Liberty club members, and in 1950 the comic was canceled.

Barely four years later, a very different Cap returned. Stan Lee sensed that the country, rocked by the Korean War, was in need of heroes again, and so he reintroduced Captain America, Human Torch, and Sub-Mariner in the dubiously titled *Young Men* #24. Steve and Bucky were still at school (and still fighting the Red Skull) but the comic's subtitle said it all: This was "Captain America, Commie Smasher"—a hero for the McCarthy era. Over the course of sixteen stories, the intrepid pair beat the stuffing out of Reds from Eastern Europe to Egypt and from China to Vietnam. But the public simply did not warm to them as they once had. Lee's instincts were right but he was just a little too early; a mere two years later, DC's revival of the Flash sparked off the great superhero revival of comics' Silver Age (1956–1969).

By late 1963, Marvel's own Silver Age heroes were beginning to find a large and enthusiastic audience, and with both the Torch and Sub-Mariner successfully given new life (in a revised version as a member of Lee & Kirby's Fantastic Four and as a guest-star in the same team's book, respectively), surely the time was ripe for the good Captain once more. Lee was cautious at first, starring Cap in a Human Torch story and having him turn out to be an impostor, and then reintroducing him properly in *Avengers* #4 (1964). It seems that, following a pitched battle in the dying days of World War II with the hooded Baron Zemo, in which the pair tried to defuse a deadly drone aircraft, Bucky bit the dust and Cap ended up floating in the ocean in ice-induced suspended animation. (Why Cap and Bucky had seemed to still be alive in the 1950s would be explained a bit later on.) The Rip Van Winkle of comics immediately joined the Avengers, gained an ersatz Bucky in Rick Jones (with his own would-be young allies, a group of intrepid wireless hams called the Teen Brigade), fought copious colorful villains, and started brooding about the past. Within a year of his revival, he had graduated to his own strip in *Tales of Suspense*, a title he shared with Iron Man, and was well on his way to becoming an icon all over again.

However, despite all manner of merchandise, and deliriously exciting art from the returning Jack

From *Captain America* #113 © 1969 Marvel Comics.
(Art by Jim Steranko.)


A MAN CAN BE DESTROYED, A TEAM OR AN ARMY CAN BE DESTROYED! BUT HOW CAN YOU DESTROY AN IDEAL--A DREAM? HOW DO YOU DESTROY A LIVING SYMBOL--OF AN INDOMITABLE WILL--AN UNCONQUERABLE SPIRIT? PERHAPS THESE ARE THE THOUGHTS WHICH THUNDER WITHIN THE PONDEROUS MINDS OF THOSE WHO HAVE CHOSEN THE WAY OF HYDRA--OF THOSE WHO FACE THE FIGHTING FURY OF FREEDOM'S MOST FEARLESS CHAMPION--THE GALLANT, RED-WHITE-AND-BLUE-GARBED FIGURE WHO HAS BEEN A TOWERING SOURCE OF INSPIRATION TO LIBERTY-LOVERS EVERYWHERE. HOW CAN THE FEARSOME FORCES OF EVIL EVER HOPE TO DESTROY THE UNCONQUERABLE CAPTAIN AMERICA?

Kirby, the character would never be as popular as Marvel's powerhouse headliners Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, or the Hulk. As an admission that the strip was at its most potent in World War II, this revival almost immediately resorted to "untold tales" of the war, and when that did not quite work Lee brought back the Red Skull and various ex-Nazis. Even though it never again hit the commercial heights of the past, the strip was nevertheless a cornerstone of the "Marvel universe," and with Lee and Kirby at the peak of their powers, the late 1960s stories were a compelling read. In 1968 Cap graduated to his own solo comic and, despite Kirby defecting to DC (once again), the character has been published continuously ever since.

Very much a man out of time, and something of an elder statesman among superheroes, the 1960s Cap was essentially an establishment figure who became the *de facto* leader of the Avengers, a part-time agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. (Marvel's James Bond–ian take on the FBI), and a father figure to Rick Jones. Indeed, for a short period in the early 1970s, Rick actually donned Bucky's costume, and although that did not quite work out, it was clear that Cap worked best with a partner. That troubled decade saw the rise of women's lib, black power, and introspection, and the strip reflected America's sense of change and uncertainty. Cap's girlfriend Sharon Carter preferred life as a jump-suited agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. to the "domestic bliss" of a married life tied to the kitchen and kids. In 1971, Captain America gained a new partner in black social worker Sam Wilson, a.k.a. the Falcon, and for a short time Cap became an NYPD cop on the beat in Harlem's ghettos. Perhaps most tellingly, one storyline had the Captain doing that most 1970s of things, getting on his motorcycle and heading out into the country in search of the "real" America.

By the mid-1970s, Stan Lee had left the comic, and young scripter Steve Englehart took Cap into deeper, darker waters. The 1950s Captain America and Bucky were revived (literally!) and revealed to have been government doppelgängers who had themselves been put into suspended animation after their overzealous red-baiting got completely out of hand. In a lengthy tale that cleverly echoed Watergate, the "Campaign to Rejoin America's Principles" was revealed to be a cover for the evil "Secret Empire" and the government's insidious corruption horrified our hero. Sickened at what he saw as the betrayal of his country, Cap quit in disgust, briefly becoming a character called Nomad (as in "The Man Without a Country") before his innate patriotism got the better of him. Of course, 1976 was the year of the Bicentennial, and Cap had to have his own take on the celebrations, fighting an underground band of neo-royalists (courtesy of Jack Kirby on his third tour of duty at Marvel).

Throughout this period, the character was a consistently merchandised property, from dolls and posters to toy cars and clothes. The Reagan years were something of a disappointment for the strip. Kirby had not handled the Falcon well and, despite his potential as a counterpoint to Cap's conservatism, he was rarely more than a second stringer. After almost ninety issues as co-star, Sam Wilson was written out of the comic and faded into obscurity. Soon after that, Sharon Carter was ignominiously killed, which was a cue for the perpetually morose Captain to become ever more introspective. This search for meaning in his life culminated in Cap running for president—perhaps the logical conclusion to a lifetime wrapped in the flag—but sadly he was not elected. (The Falcon also entered politics a few years later, trading in his costume for life as a congressman.)

The 1980s came to be dominated by the writing of Mark Gruenwald, who stayed on the strip for an astonishing ten years and adopted a more lighthearted approach as a counterpoint to the previous decade's upheavals. The strip had always featured a number of recurring villains, including the outrageously camp French martial arts expert Batroc the Leaper, the large-headed Modok, insidious crime cartels A.I.M. and H.Y.D.R.A., and of course the ever-present Red Skull. Under Gruenwald, the villains expanded exponentially but the comic, perhaps, lost some of its individuality in the process. One exception to this was a witty response to recession-era cutbacks, in which the government stripped Steve Rogers of his costume, claiming that they were no longer getting their money's worth. His re-

Chris Evans stars as Captain America in the 2011 film adaptation (Marvel/Paramount / The Kobal Collection.)

placement, the Super-Patriot (later known as US-Agent), soon discovered that like the similarly ill-conceived new Coca Cola, replacing a living legend is far from easy. Inevitably, the original Cap ("Classic Cap," anyone?) returned, but the departing Gruenwald handed his successors the most poisoned of chalices by killing the character off; it seems that the super serum that had kept him going all those years had finally run out.

But there are always more comics to be printed, more movies to be made, and more merchandise to sell. It is an accepted fact, of course, that no one stays dead in comics for very long. One blood transfusion—from the Red Skull, no less—and Cap was back as good as new. So, too, was Sharon Carter, and in fact the 1990s and 2000s saw an endless series of new directions, relaunches, returns to basics, and yet more relaunches. Longtime readers have now learned to expect several inviolable certainties: that Cap will regularly pine for the dear, departed Bucky; that no matter how many painful deaths he may suffer, the Red Skull will always come back for more; that you are never more than a few issues away from a World War II flashback; and that a new direction is always around the corner. These have included the revelation (in the 2003 series *Truth: Red, White & Black,* written by Robert Morales and drawn by Kyle Baker), that the super soldier serum was originally tested on black GIs, one of whom briefly adventured before Steve Rogers; hints that Cap was frozen on purpose by a government that feared he would oppose the bombing of Hiroshima; yet another death (in *Captain America* vol. 3 #50), his resurrection from which remains unexplained; and a new 2004 *Captain America and the Falcon* comic, by acclaimed writer Christopher Priest.

In recent years, another critically praised author, Ed Brubaker, has written *Captain America* storylines, including the return of Bucky and the seeming death and resurrection of the original Captain America. In 2005 it was revealed that Bucky had survived the explosion at the war's end, and had been found by the Soviets, who had brainwashed him into becoming an assassin called the Winter Soldier. Between missions the Soviets kept the Winter Soldier in suspended animation, and thus Bucky, though now an adult, was still in his early twenties. Upon recovering his memories of his true identity, Bucky again became Captain America's ally.

Brubaker also wrote the controversial storyline in which the Red Skull engineered what appeared to be the public assassination of Captain America, in 2007. Since Steve Rogers was believed to be dead, Bucky assumed the costumed identity of Captain America. Eventually it was revealed that the original Captain America was not dead, but had been displaced in time and space. The original Captain America finally returned to the present and bested the Red Skull. Steve Rogers decided to allow Bucky to carry on in the role of Captain America. However, Bucky was seemingly killed in the course of Marvel's 2011 *Fear Itself* series.

Amidst his popularity in the comics, the patriotic hero has appeared in movie serials, direct-to-video productions, and animated adventures. He appeared in a flashback (with X-Men hero Wolverine) for the fifth and final season of Fox's popular *X Men* series, in 1996–1997, then alongside other World War II heroes in a three-part adventure for *Spider-Man*'s fourth season, in 1997–1998. Although Fox commissioned and developed a *Captain America* animated pilot in 1998, plans did not proceed. Captain America also appeared in several episodes of Fox Kids' *The Avengers,* in the 1999–2000 season. He also appears in two current animated series: *The Super Hero Squad Show,* voiced by Tom Kenny, and *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes.*

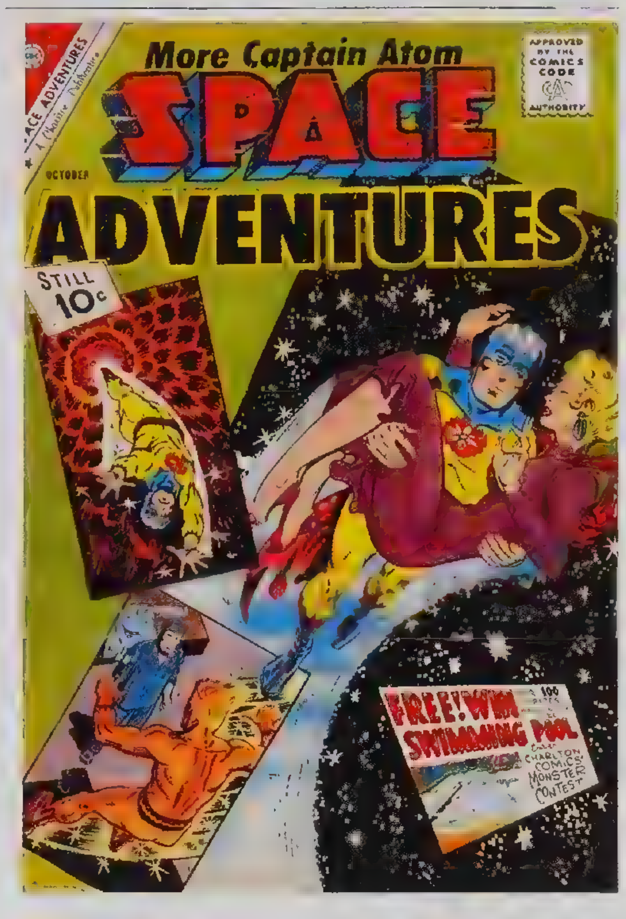
Marvel Studios produced the live action movie *Captain America: The First Avenger,* which was released in June 2011. The film is directed by Joe Johnston, who previously directed the 1991 film adaptation of *The Rocketeer.* Set during World War II, the movie stars Chris Evans, who previously played the Human Torch in the *Fantastic Four* movies, as Captain America, and Hugo Weaving as the Red Skull. Evans returned as Captain America in the 2012 film *The Avengers.*

In both the comics and on-screen, it is inevitable that Steve Rogers will continue in the role of Captain America. This superhero, who is literally wrapped in the flag, has proudly symbolized his country for decades, and will no doubt continue to do so. —*DAR, AM & PS*

Captain Atom

Captain Atom holds a special place in comics history—not so much as a creation himself as for one of his creators. The Captain was the main hero from Charlton Comics, the independent-minded, eccentric, and largely unloved publishing house from Derby, Connecticut. Captain Atom made his first appearance in 1960 in the pages of one of the company's science fiction and mystery comics, *Space Adventures* (issue #33). He preceded Marvel's more famous Fantastic Four by some twenty months and, more to the point, Steve Ditko's Spider-Man by two-and-a-half years. Ditko had been Charlton's star artist for many years and was establishing himself at Marvel at the same time, but Captain Atom marked his first significant work on a superhero and laid the foundations for his later success as one of the decade's most important artists.

Captain Atom's opening story in *Space Adventures,* by editor/writer Pat Masuli and artist Steve Ditko, reveals how rocket specialist and air force captain, Allen Adam, loses a screwdriver during some last-minute adjustments to a missile's nuclear warhead, and unwisely delays his exit by looking for the tool. Unable to leave the rocket in time, he is accidentally launched into space and blown to atoms when the missile explodes. Incredibly, he somehow manages to reconstruct himself and reappear in his military base back on Earth, shooting off radiation from every pore in his body. Military scientists quickly devise a sparkly yellow-and-red costume (with a red starburst and an atomic symbol on its chest) to contain all the radiation, and thus a new superhero—Captain Atom—is born. Captain Atom soon discovers that he can fly as fast as a rocket (100,000 miles per hour), adjust his molecular structure to walk through walls, endure temperatures as high as 10,000 degrees Centigrade, and pack enough of a punch to destroy an errant missile.



Space Adventures #42 © 1961 Charlton Comics. (Cover art by Steve Ditko.)

Captain Atom's origin story and powers resemble those of Doctor Solar (Gold Key Comics) and Nukla (Dell Comics), other atomic physicist–types turned superheroes during comics Silver Age (1956–1969). The early Captain Atom stories ranged between five and nine pages, and there were up to three adventures per issue, of three general types. In the first category, the hero was busy either helping small children or rescuing satellites, planes, or people in distress. The second story type involved some sort of alien menace, often an extraterrestrial invasion force or glamorous space sirens, usually from Venus. The last and most common type of tale featured the hero foiling some sort of nuclear attack or sabotage attempt by an unnamed, Eastern Bloc dictatorship, and indulging in the sort of violent red-baiting not seen since the days of Captain America, Commie Smasher. There was no room for characterization or supporting cast, and were it not for Ditko's art the strip would probably have remained a minor footnote in the history books.

After ten issues, Captain Atom bowed out of *Space Adventures* with issue #42, but Ditko and superheroes went on to great things, and by the mid-1960s, Charlton decided to cash in on the popularity of both by reprinting old Captain Atom strips in three issues of *Strange Suspense Stories* (#75–#77, 1965). This venture proved successful enough to prompt a new series of *Captain Atom* comics (carrying on the numbering from *Strange Suspense Stories* at #78) from writer Joe Gill and, once again, Steve Ditko—moonlighting from his Spider-Man and Dr. Strange commitments. In fact, Ditko gave up his duties on the Hulk series to return to Captain Atom.

Initially, the new Captain Atom stories were much the same as the old, with the predictable alien invasions, but Atom did get his own supervillain at last—the brightly costumed Dr. Spectro. With issue #82, incoming Charlton editor Dick Giordano shook things up a bit by introducing a new, young writer (David Kaler) and a female companion (Nightshade); then in issue #84 Atom was given a new silver-and-blue costume and a regular backup feature (the new Blue Beetle). Nightshade was, like Captain Atom, a government agent—in her case, as an expert at the martial arts—and the pair soon found themselves tackling industrial spies and supervillains such as the Ghost, Punch and Jewelee, and a returning Dr. Spectro. In civilian life, Nightshade was wealthy heiress Eve Eden, who chose to fight crime secretly after her mother's assassination. In an unusual twist, it was later revealed that her mother was a princess from a magical dimension, who was killed by aliens. By and large, the new direction was a definite improvement. Giordano had created a whole superhero line for Charlton, spanning comics as diverse as *Thunderbolt, Judo-Master, The Fightin' Five, Hercules*, and *Sarge Steel*, but sales were disappointing, and none of these comics lasted more than two years.

Captain Atom's final issue was #89 in late 1967, though the unpublished #90 was later serialized in the fanzine *Charlton Bullseye*. After a couple of reprint series from Charlton in the late 1970s, enterprising publisher Bill Black created a supergroup out of the (by then defunct) Charlton heroes for a one-off adventure, in 1983. *The Sen-*

tinels of Justice featured Captain Atom, Blue Beetle, Nightshade, and the Question. However, when *The Sentinels* reappeared two years later, it was with an entirely new line-up. By that time, Giordano had become a senior executive at DC Comics, and remembering his fondness for the old Charlton heroes, he persuaded the company to buy their rights.

Consequently, in 1987 a new Captain Atom arrived on the shelves. This was Nathanial Adam, a condemned traitor who had volunteered for a military experiment involving his being placed near a detonating nuclear bomb. The explosion sent Adam into a quantum field, from which he returned twenty years later with powers and a (silver) costume similar to those of the original Atom. This new Captain Atom worked covertly for Air Force intelligence under General Wade Eiling, who (strangely enough) had adopted Adam's now grown-up son at the time of the experiment. The strip was developed by writer Cary Bates and artist Pat Broderick, and it soon proved popular enough for its star to join the Justice League of America. Over the course of fifty-seven issues, the Captain battled with such villains as Plastique, Major Force, and a new Dr. Spectro, and he rubbed shoulders with Blue Beetle and Nightshade once again.

In 1991, with the series in decline, Captain Atom was penciled in as the hero-turned-bad for DC's *Armageddon 2001* series, but a leak to the fan press saved him, and he became one of the comic's stars instead. However, as a government agent with a criminal background, the new Captain had none of the wholesome appeal of his predecessor, and it is no surprise that he became a founding member of the brutal Extreme Justice Group in 1995. *Extreme Justice,* which also included Maxima, Booster Gold, and Blue Beetle, was conceived as a home for heroes who felt that the Justice League was too soft on criminals, and it was a largely unloved example of the 1990s craze for darker, more violent heroes. It lasted for only nineteen issues.

Captain Atom appeared in the 2003 miniseries *Formerly Known as the Justice League,* and starred in the limited series *Captain Atom: Armageddon* (2005–2006), published by DC's WildStorm imprint. He later went insane and appeared as the villainous Monarch in *Countdown: Arena* (2007). Regaining his sanity, Captain Atom co-starred in the miniseries *Justice League: Generation Lost* (2010–2011).

Author Alan Moore partly based Dr. Manhattan in *Watchmen* on Captain Atom. The new *Captain Atom* comic book series launched in September 2011, by writer JT Krul and artist Freddie Williams II, explores whether the Captain, possessing godlike powers, will lose his sense of humanity, the same dilemma faced by Dr. Manhattan.

Captain Atom played a significant role in the direct-to-video animated film *Superman/Batman: Public Enemies* (2009). He also made appearances in the *Justice League Unlimited* animated series (2004–2006). *—DAR & PS*

Captain Marvel

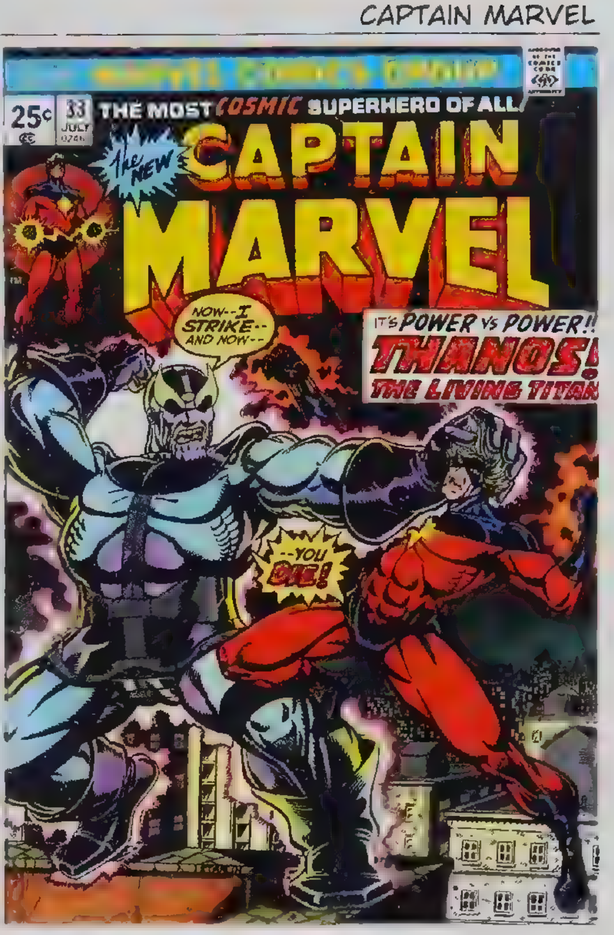
As of 2004, there have been five Captain Marvels, the first of whom was Fawcett Comics' best-selling character and the most popular superhero of the Golden Age of comics (1938–1954). In 1966, notorious schlock publisher Myron Fass published a few issues of his own Captain Marvel, about which the less said the better. Marvel Comics' hero, on whom this entry focuses, premiered in late 1967, and it is widely thought that the company primarily wanted to copyright the name (as the publisher's success has grown, it has become increasingly proprietary over the name Marvel). Nevertheless, that first appearance of the character in *Marvel Superheroes* #12 was one of the more unusual of the 1960s.

An earlier issue of the Fantastic Four had introduced a large robot called the Sentry, which had been sent to Earth by an alien race called the Kree, who had apparently been visiting the planet for centuries. To find out what happened to their Sentry, the Kree send out an espionage unit headed by the ambitious Colonel Yon-Rogg and including the romantic couple of medic Una and Captain Mar-Vell. The Captain is dispatched undercover to assume the role of a professor in the

Cape Canaveral missile complex, where he meets beautiful security chief Carol Danvers. Donning his white and green space suit (which looks much like a superhero costume), he has all sorts of abilities, including flying and super strength, which he has much use for as he encounters all manner of monsters, villains, and alien creatures. Confusingly, in his Kree identity he is Mar-Vell but seemingly changes the spelling of his name to Marvel when indulging in superheroics.

Much of the comic's tension issued from the love triangle of Mar-Vell, Una, and Yon-Rogg, whose ruthless attitude to the natives (us!), and designs on the young nurse, gradually forced the pacifist Mar-Vell to turn against his own people. Una was killed in issue #11—an unusual event in comics at that time. Five issues later, an avenging Mar-Vell returned home, where he foiled a coup and was given even more powers, as well as a stylish new costume. But he found himself stranded in the Negative Zone, a kind of limbo.

Issue #17 saw a major change of direction, courtesy of a new creative team: Roy Thomas and Gil Kane. A spectral Captain Marvel convinces perennial boy sidekick, Rick Jones, to try on a pair of wrist bands (or Nega-bands), which when struck together enable him to switch places with the lad. Having initially taken the character's name from Fawcett, Marvel was now very cheekily adopting the transformation from boy to man that made Fawcett's Captain Marvel so popular. Following several periods of cancellation, Jim Starlin took over creative duties, and things started to get very cosmic. Starlin crafted an epic intergalactic battle that saw his arch-villain Thanos journeying to Earth from his home on Saturn's moon Titan, to find the Cosmic Cube and thereby take over the universe. In the granite-faced Thanos and his colorful entourage of lackeys and foes, Starlin had created an exciting cast of intergalactic characters, which would feature in Marvel for decades to come.


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
25¢
33
JULY
THE MOST COSMIC SUPERHERO OF ALL!
The NEW CAPTAIN MARVEL
NOW--I STRIKE-- AND NOW--
IT'S POWER VS POWER!!
THANOS! THE LIVING TITAN!
--YOU DIE!

Captain Marvel #33 © 1974 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jim Starlin.)

The Thanos saga ran from issue #25 to #35, to much acclaim, and was followed up by a bizarre story featuring Nitro (a villain who blew himself up!), after which Starlin was off to new pastures. The book carried on in a solid enough manner, including a story which de-coupled Mar-Vell and his sidekick, Rick, but was never as popular again. In 1977, on-again off-again romantic interest Carol Danvers was given her own, short-lived comic as Ms. Marvel, complete with cosmic powers and a more revealing version of Mar-Vell's costume. The final regularly published Captain Marvel story came out in 1981, a long time from his glory days, but one year later Starlin came back for a graphic novel—Marvel's first—which wrapped the series up. His story revealed that, in fighting Nitro, Mar-Vell had been affected by radioactivity, and by the tale's end, our hero was dead from cancer.

After an appropriate period of mourning (i.e., a couple of months) Marvel, ever mindful of the dangers of letting a copyright lapse, introduced another Captain Marvel. This incarnation was statuesque African American Monica Rambeau, who could turn herself into pure energy. Following an early team-up with Spider-Man, she went on to a long spell in the Avengers (eventually being renamed Photon and later Pulsar). As she faded from view in the 1990s, yet another Captain Marvel appeared. This time, it was Mar-Vell's previously unknown son Genis (whose growth had somehow been accelerated), complete with cosmic powers, his dad's costume, and a talent for teenage whining. (Uncharacteristically for comics heroes, Mar-Vell has stayed dead, though from the other side of the grave fans got to see a lot of him in the alternate-future series *Universe X* [2000–2001] and *Paradise X* [2002–2003], which portrayed him as a somewhat imperious self-styled messiah.) The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a number of relaunches for Genis, including a twist in which he dons a version of his father's first Kree costume, becomes incredibly powerful, and goes mad. Genis-Vell's sister, Phyla-Vell, briefly used the name of Captain Marvel before adopting the name Quasar. Even Rick Jones has returned, proving that the more things change, the more they stay the same. —*DAR*

Captain Marvel Jr.

With sales of Fawcett's Captain Marvel comics increasing almost daily in the early 1940s, it is not surprising that Fawcett Comics wanted another superhero to pull in the fans. Captain Marvel Jr. grew out of one of the first title crossovers, as Captain Marvel and Bulletman battled the jackbooted Captain Nazi from the pages of Master Comics to Whiz Comics and back again. In the December 1941 edition of *Whiz Comics* (#25), Captain Nazi (effectively an evil mirror image of Captain Marvel) plummets into the sea near a small boat, and when its occupants attempt to rescue him he hurls them into the sea, killing one and injuring the other. Well, what else would you expect from someone called Captain Nazi? Seeing that the injured would-be-rescuer, a kid, is close to death, Captain Marvel takes him to the ever convenient wizard, Shazam, who transfers some of the elder Marvel's superpowers to the lad, and—voila!—up pops Captain Marvel Jr.

As conceived by editor and writer Eddie Heron with artist Mac Raboy, Junior was an athletic, almost angelic-looking fourteen-year-old boy, clad in a blue version of Captain Marvel's costume. Once restored to his civilian identity of Freddy Freeman (which happened whenever he spoke Captain Marvel's name), he was a crippled newspaper boy, selling his wares on a windy street corner, propped up on his crutches. To compound the misery of comics' own Tiny Tim, the poor lad was an orphan whose grandfather had been the old man killed by Captain Nazi, and his meager earnings were spent on a shabby room in a nearby guesthouse. As reader identification went, it was a remarkable piece of wish fulfillment to see the poor wretch metamorphose into the god-like junior hero. But astute readers might also wonder why Freeman did not simply remain in his superhero form, make vast amounts of cash saving the world, and retire to a life of luxury; the idea appears to have never crossed his mind.

One of the comic's great selling points was undoubtedly Raboy's elegant, exquisitely drawn artwork, which was far more realistic than that of the Captain Marvel strip. However, Raboy was such a perfectionist that he soon found it almost impossible to meet deadlines, and he hit upon the solution of pasting-in photostats of previous drawings. In fact, some pages were almost entirely made up of stats, with new backgrounds provided by one of his assistants. Raboy left Fawcett in 1944, but the feature carried on, drawn by Bud Thompson, Kurt Schaffenberger, and others, in both *Master Comics* and Junior's own title.

Throughout the war years, Junior repeatedly tangled with Captain Nazi and amassed a gaggle of supervillains, including Dr. Eternity, the Pied Piper, and Captain Nippon. In the postwar period, one villain came to dominate the strip: the boy scientist-gone-bad Sivana Junior, son of — oh, you guessed it—Captain Marvel's arch-foe Dr. Sivana! Sivana Junior's evil plots included potions to make himself a giant, induce insatiable hunger, or provoke unstoppable jitterbugging. As the decade progressed, however, the feature came to be dominated by the fads of the day, such as crime comics, juvenile delinquency comics, funny animal comics, and even horror. One remarkable cover memorably showed Captain Marvel Jr. being strapped to an electric chair and shot through with electricity. That is not to say that the strip was all darkness and no light, however, since our hero was just as likely to be found speeding up the revolutions of the planet Mars as fighting werewolves or gangsters.

Captain Marvel Jr.'s comic was canceled in 1953, along with the rest of Fawcett's superhero line, and he lay fallow until DC Comics' revival in the 1970s, when he starred in a number of decent, if unspectacular, strips. In the 1990s *Power of Shazam* revival he played a somewhat more prominent role and also briefly joined the Teen Titans (decades after his birth, he was seemingly still a teenager). But despite this longevity, his true importance might actually lie somewhere altogether more surprising. Several sources have suggested that a certain Elvis Presley was a big fan of the character and modeled his look on Junior, right down to the curls and insouciant quiff that set a generation's hearts aflutter. In Las Vegas as well, it seems that his cape was a tribute to the one Captain Marvel Jr. wore, so the look that launched a thousand imitators came from the comics—not bad for a newspaper boy on crutches.

Captain Marvel Jr. played a major role in the comics maxi-series *The Trials of Shazam!* (2006–2008), in which he became a new version of the adult Captain Marvel, but adopted the name of their wizard mentor Shazam. Captain Marvel Jr. appears alongside the original Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel in the 2011 episode of the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* titled "The Malicious Mr. Mind!" —*DAR & PS*

Captain Marvel/Shazam!

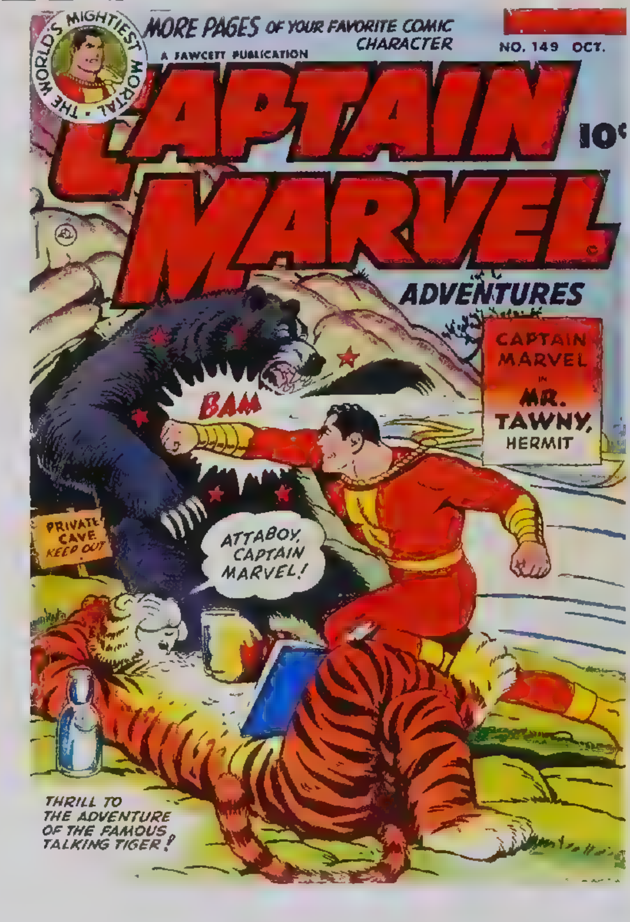
In the pantheon of truly great original superheroes, there are Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man, and the Hulk, and one other that is far less well known today: Captain Marvel. In his heyday in the 1940s, the good Captain outsold every other superhero, including Superman, and launched a vast line of comics and merchandise, as well as a decade-spanning lawsuit that ultimately brought his entire empire crashing down.

By 1940, Fawcett Comics was already one of the top publishing houses in the country, and sensing that comics were becoming the next big thing, the company decided to bring out its own superhero. Calling on staff writer Bill Parker, Fawcett initially wanted him to create six heroes, each with a different attribute, but later decided to combine all six powers into one person. Another staff member, Charles Clarence ("C. C.") Beck, was recruited from the humor magazine department, and in February 1940, Captain Marvel was born in the pages of *Whiz Comics*.

The first story opens with young, orphaned newspaper seller, Billy Batson, being summoned by a stranger into a nearby subway station, and in short order the boy is whisked by subway car to the end of a tunnel. Once there, the lad is confronted by a long-bearded wizard named Shazam, who has been hanging around for 3,000 years protecting the world from evil. He declares that it is now Batson's turn, and when the boy repeats the wizard's name, "Shazam!", he is transformed into a red-suited, adult man with rippling muscles, a white cape, gold boots, and a lighting-flash design on his chest. The wizard instructs him that he now possesses six great powers: wisdom from Solomon, strength from Hercules, stamina from Atlas, power from Zeus, courage from Achilles, and speed from Mercury (the initials of each "donor" conveniently forming the magic word, Shazam!). Whenever Captain Marvel wishes to resume the form of Batson, he need only repeat the word and the reverse transformation will occur. Thrilled with his new body and seemingly limitless powers, the Captain travels back to the surface, failing to see the falling block of granite that inconveniently squashes the old man. Still, he need not worry, since Shazam would reappear at various points over the coming decade, seemingly none the worse for wear.

In no time at all, Captain Marvel met and defeated his first foe, the bald-headed mad scientist Dr. Sivana (in the first of many, many such battles), and as Billy Batson, he had gained a job as a radio announcer at station WHIZ. The story and art were direct, simple, and charming, and the readers loved the strip. While Superman's stories were ostensibly serious and science-based, Captain Marvel was a creation of magic, and literally anything could happen in his adventures. They were also underpinned by a wry sense of humor, as was soon proved by the introduction of the bumbling would-be superheroes, the Lieutenant Marvels. More importantly, the Captain (or "the Big Red Cheese" as he was nicknamed by Sivana) was every boy's wish made flesh. Superman and Batman were resolutely grown-ups, but Billy Batson was a kid just like his readers—apart from being able to change into a dashing superhero (a sort of omnipotent big brother or uncle figure) at the drop of a magic word. Why relate to a sidekick like Robin when you can imagine being the real thing?

Almost immediately, sales were colossal, and in early 1941, Captain Marvel was given his own title. Soon after, two spin-off characters, Captain Marvel Jr. and Mary Marvel, began appearing in other Fawcett comics. Later still, that pair spun off into their own books, while Captain Marvel himself began to crop up in such comics as *All Hero* and *America's Greatest Comics*. Then, in 1945, all three characters starred together in *Marvel Family*. By 1943, their combined titles were selling almost 3 million copies a month and the Captain Marvel comic itself was appearing twice a month. At its peak, two years later, the comic was selling an amazing 1.3 million copies per issue, and was by a substantial margin the most successful superhero comic on the stands.


THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL
MORE PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC CHARACTER
A FAWCETT PUBLICATION
NO. 149 OCT.
CAPTAIN MARVEL
10¢
ADVENTURES
CAPTAIN MARVEL IN MR. TAWNY, HERMIT
BAM
PRIVATE CAVE KEEP OUT
ATTABOY, CAPTAIN MARVEL!
THRILL TO THE ADVENTURE OF THE FAMOUS TALKING TIGER!

Captain Marvel #149 © 1953 Fawcett Comics. (Cover art by C.C. Beck.)

The sheer quantity of product required by this demand was too much for Parker (who was, in any case, drafted in 1941) and Beck on their own, and so Fawcett recruited a small army of creators. Writers included Rod Reed and Eddie Heron, but it was the prolific Otto Binder who was to define the true essence of Captain Marvel over the course of his 451 scripts (which were part of more than 1,000 stories in total, if you include the whole range of Marvel Family titles). The art was taken from two studios (comics factories, almost) set up by Beck and partner Pete Costanza, a third studio run by Otto Binder's brother Jack, and Fawcett's own stable of talents, including Marc Swayze. But it was Beck's simple, yet perfectly realized, art that best characterized the Captain; his bold and almost cartoonish approach being both exciting and humorous, and instantly accessible to even the youngest reader. Binder was only one of the thousands to recognize this, having said of Beck, "The enormous success of Captain Marvel was due primarily to the storytelling talents of Beck. He had tremendous story sense and could see ways to improve the flow of my scripts, or bolster up weak parts. I believe I wrote good stuff in general, but Beck's art made me seem a master."

Binder and Beck's finest hour was undoubtedly a serial that ran in the pages of *Whiz Comics* for two years during the darkest days of the war: "The Monster Society of Evil." The tale introduced an evil criminal genius named Mr. Mind, who gathered together a group of villains—including Sivana, Captain Nazi, Mr. Banjo (now there's a name to conjure with!), King Kull, and Ibac—to do battle with the Big Red Cheese. In a masterstroke that could only have worked in Captain

Marvel stories, Mr. Mind turned out to be a particularly devious worm, much to the amazed delight of the readers. Another favorite was an anthropomorphic, talking tiger called Mr. Tawky Tawny, who repeatedly roped the Captain into his schemes to get rich, to become a movie star, and similar escapades. A less successful development was occasional sidekick Steamboat, an unfortunately caricatured African American boy, who was widely denounced by critics and has since been airbrushed out of the comics history books.

With such rich material (and an enthusiastic audience) to draw upon, Captain Marvel was among the most merchandised of Golden Age superheroes, probably second only to (him again!) Superman. Throughout the 1940s, all sorts of badges, puzzles, planes, games, clothes, watches, figures, and all-purpose do-dads spewed forth from the toy companies. Fawcett themselves were quick to introduce a Captain Marvel fan club in 1941 and a Mary Marvel club five years later. In 1941, Republic Pictures released the highly regarded movie serial, *The Adventures of Captain Marvel,* starring Tom Tyler and Frank Coghlan Jr.

In his many hundreds of strips, Captain Marvel tirelessly conquered an unending stream of villains, but there was one enemy even he could not defeat—his greatest rival, Superman, and the latter's litigious publisher, DC Comics. As early as 1939, DC had successfully prosecuted Fox Comics for their character Wonder Man's similarity to Superman and, as soon as it appeared that the Big Red Cheese was becoming a serious rival, DC turned its sights on him. From 1941 to 1953, Fawcett and DC battled it out in court, earning their lawyers a small fortune in fees before Fawcett threw in the towel, agreeing to cease publishing the character. It could be argued that just about every superhero owed something to the character that started the genre, and that Captain Marvel—of all of them—owed the least to the Man of Steel. However, by this point superhero sales were falling and comics in general were suffering something of a slump, following a media-led witch hunt and the arrival of the Comics Code. So Fawcett decided to shut down its entire comics division, and rather than incur further court costs they settled with DC, and the Captain was doomed to fly no more—or so it seemed.

For many years before the lawsuit, Captain Marvel stories were licensed all over the world, and in Brazil and Great Britain (when the licenses ran out in the mid-1950s) comic publishers simply drew their own stories, changing the name of the character. In Brazil the character was called Capitao Marvel, while in Britain he was renamed Marvelman and starred in hundreds of strips well into the 1960s. Back in the United States, however, Captain Marvel lived on in the memories of comics fans, and throughout the 1960s he was a nostalgic figure in fanzines and convention costume parades. No one would have guessed that DC, of all companies, would turn out to be the Captain's savior, but it was indeed DC that, however ironically, licensed him from Fawcett and began publishing a new series in 1973. DC also managed to tempt C. C. Beck out of retirement to resuscitate the Captain. The only fly in the ointment was that Marvel Comics had in the meantime appropriated the name Captain Marvel for one of its comics, and so the new DC comic had to have a new name; DC happily hit on *Shazam!*

However, what worked so well in the 1940s seemed not to have the same resonance in the more cynical 1970s, and the revival was not the success everyone had hoped for. Beck argued with DC over the direction of the feature, which he said the writers had failed to grasp, and he left after ten issues. He maintained that the original run had dramatic stories that had a humorous treatment, whereas this newer run was all too often played for laughs—and with stories such as "Invasion of the Salad Men," you could see his point. Still, it did reintroduce the Captain and his supporting and opposing casts to a new generation, and it undoubtedly prompted Filmation Studios to produce a *Shazam!* television show. The live-action show premiered on CBS in 1974 and ran for several seasons, starring Jackson Bostwick (and, later, John Davey) as Captain Marvel with Michael Gray as Billy Batson. And a new mentoring character called, of course, Mentor was introduced. While it suffered from a small budget and limited special effects, it had a certain charm and is fondly remembered by fans.

What the show failed to do was help sales of the comic, even though for a while the latter tried—to little effect—to reflect the television version, albeit replacing Mentor with Uncle Marvel (a regular of Mary Marvel strips in the 1940s). A further revamp, which had a more realistic, gritty approach to the art, was similarly ineffective, and for many years the strip was relegated to backup status in comics such as *World's Finest*. Subsequent revivals in such comics as *Superpowers*, and Jerry Ordway's well-crafted *Power of Shazam* series (which ran for five years from 1995 to 1999), have kept the Captain in the public eye, but have not been enormous successes financially. However, an almost imperceptible shift has granted him iconic status in DC's lineup of stars, so that he regularly appears as statues, action figures, posters, and books, along with the rest of DC's characters. Star artist Alex Ross made him one of the central figures of the blockbuster *Kingdom Come* comic (1996) and in 2000 painted the lavish *Shazam—Power of Hope* oversized paperback book, including the Captain as one of only four DC characters to be given the honor of such an upscale comic (inevitably, Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman were the others).

Some stories in the main DC universe continuity involving Captain Marvel and the Marvel Family in the early twenty-first century, such as *The Trials of Shazam* (2006–2007), tend to have a grim, dark, adult tone like so many contemporary superhero sagas. In welcome contrast, the miniseries *Shazam: The Monster Society of Evil* (2007), written and drawn by Jeff Smith, the creator of the highly acclaimed comics series *Bone*, presents an alternative, child-friendly version of the Captain Marvel mythos that recaptures the whimsy and charm of the Captain's 1940s stories.

Outside comics' pages, Captain Marvel appeared in a 2005 episode of the animated television series *Justice League Unlimited*, voiced by Jerry O'Connell. The Captain has also made numerous appearances on the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. Captain Marvel teamed with Superman in a short animated film. *Superman/Shazam!: The Return of Black Adam* (2010), which was released as part of Warner Home Video's *DC Showcase Original Shorts Collection* set. In it Jerry O'Connell again provides the voice of Captain Marvel, and James Garner is the voice of Shazam. Could lightning strike again for Billy Batson and Captain Marvel? Only the future will tell. *—DAR & PS*

Catwoman

Catwoman, slinking in and out of thievery like a mischievous kitten, has titillated Batman throughout most of the Dark Knight's long career. This "princess of plunder" was envisioned by Batman creator Bob Kane and writer Bill Finger as a female counterpart to the Caped Crusader, and as a means to attract girls to the comics' readership, but through spunk and tenacity she quickly distinguished herself as much more than a copycat. From her first appearance as "The Cat" in *Batman* #1 (1940), Gotham City's most notorious burglar—dressed to the nines (lives?) in a clinging, cleavage-showcasing gown—arouses a side of Batman that the prepubescent Robin finds puzzling. Through each encounter, suggestive repartee between the Bat and Cat intimates that if not for their ethical division, these two would boot the Boy Wonder out of the Batcave and redefine the term "Dynamic Duo."

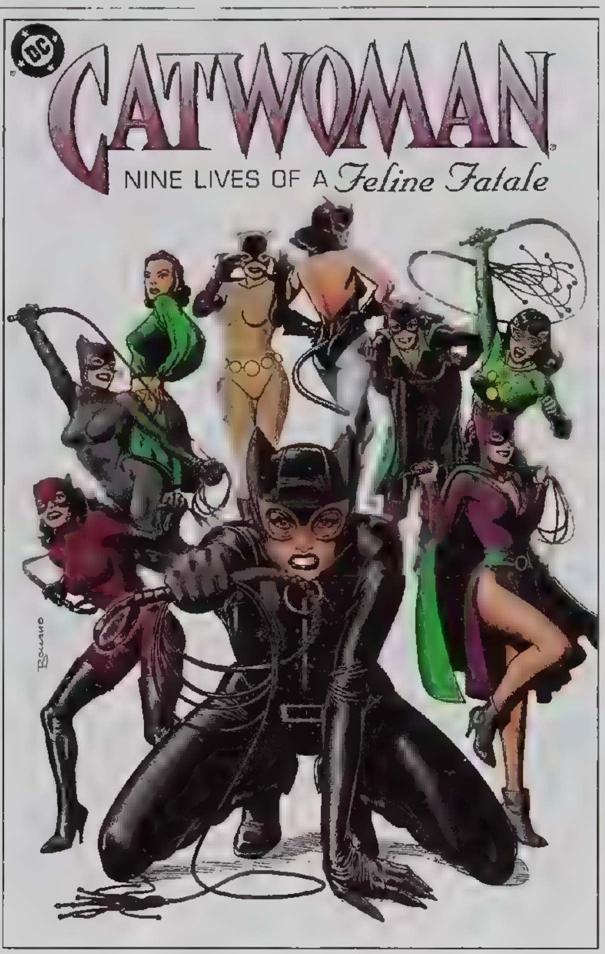
When compared to the Joker, Two-Face, and other psychopaths in Batman's deadly rogues' gallery, Catwoman, whose penchant for luxuries entices her into a career as a thief, seems tame—but by no means is this lady docile. Wielding a whip with a "cat-o'-nine-tails," a weapon that by the late 1980s acquired sado-sexual connotations, the cunning Catwoman, with her pugilistic prowess and catlike reflexes, becomes a fierce combatant when cornered or challenged. She had clawed her way through a decade's worth of stories in random issues of *Batman* and *Detective Comics* before her roots were disclosed. In "The Secret Life of Catwoman" in *Batman* #62 (1950), the villainess reveals her true stripes as she saves Batman's life, taking a blow to the skull in the process. Once regaining consciousness, she emerges from amnesia with the recollection of her past life as Selina Kyle, flight attendant, and no knowledge of her stint as a criminal. Aiding Batman and Gotham City Police Commissioner

Gordon in their apprehension of her former partner in pillage, Kyle is exonerated of her felonies and allowed to set up business as a pet-shop operator. But before long her ego, bruised by taunts from the press and former underworld associates, leads her back into larceny as Catwoman.

While her identity was known to Batman and Gordon, Catwoman's mystique stymied her adversaries, particularly her ability to resurface after seemingly perishing—did she, like her namesake, really have nine lives? This raven-haired, wide-eyed "felonious feline" also dazzled Gotham's finest with her wardrobe: Aside from the ghastly full-sized cathead mask she wore during a few early outings, Catwoman skulked about for more than two decades in a stylish purple dress, green cape, and a cat-eared cowl, before streamlining her garb in the 1960s into a form-fitting emerald catsuit that would have made Diana Rigg (TV's Mrs. Peel) green with envy. By 1969, she'd slipped into a skintight blue bodysuit with a long cat tail, before returning to the purple gear in the mid-1970s. She also frequently cavorted about town in a cat-shaped "kitty" car, took to the air in a catplane, hurled a catarang, and even used a cat-apult to leap to a helicopter while pulling a heist.

Throughout most of her comic book career, Catwoman was portrayed as Batman's most likeable villain: Sure, she was a bad girl, but not *that* bad. In the late 1970s, Catwoman's heart of gold led her to shed her life of crime and marry Batman—not in the comics' regular continuity, but on "Earth-Two," DC's parallel world where its characters from the 1940s resided. Their union bore a daughter, Helena, who became the Huntress when the Earth-Two Catwoman was murdered.

Back on "Earth-One," Catwoman continued to pillage, even after DC Comics jettisoned its multiple-Earth concept in 1985. Selina Kyle was reinvented, along with the Dark Knight, in Frank Miller and David Mazzucchelli's groundbreaking "Batman: Year One" four-issue story arc beginning in *Batman* #404 (1987). Kyle, it was disclosed, endured an abusive childhood and was on the streets at age twelve, becoming fiercely independent as a result. Seguing into a life of prostitution, this new Kyle was a dominatrix with a butch haircut, who donned a leather catsuit and used her whips on johns before taking to the rooftops as the burglar Catwoman. More recently, however, Catwoman has given up streetwalking and developed a profound moral sense, albeit one tempered by her hard life. She serves as an occasional ally to Batman and often protects the downtrodden in Gotham City's seediest neighborhoods.


DC
CATWOMAN
NINE LIVES OF A Feline Fatale
Bolland

Catwoman: Nine Lives of a Feline Fatale trade paperback © 2004 DC Comics. (Cover art by Brian Bolland.)

Catwoman's popularity was bolstered in the mid-1960s by Julie Newmar's tantalizing portrayal of the villainess in the popular *Batman* television show. Newmar sunk her claws into the role, playfully frolicking about with moves so sensuously catlike that all eyes were glued to her while she was on camera. Her immediate successors to the part, Lee Meriwether in the *Batman* theatrical movie (1966), and Eartha Kitt in later episodes of the television series, never quite commanded the screen as Newmar did. In director Tim Burton's *Batman Returns* (1992), Michelle Pfeiffer's take

Halle Berry played Catwoman in the 2004 film version. (Warner Bros./DC Comics / The Kobal Collection / Gregory, Doane.)

on Catwoman rivaled Newmar's, and spawned a long-delayed but disappointing Catwoman movie, released in 2004, starring Halle Berry as a different Catwoman from Selina Kyle.

Catwoman has also appeared in the numerous incarnations of Batman television cartoon series to appear throughout the years and has been merchandized since the 1960s with items including dolls, action figures, and bubble-bath dispensers. Adrienne Barbeau provided the voice of Catwoman in *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992–1995), and Gina Gershon voiced Catwoman in *The Batman* series (2004–2008).

The first ongoing *Catwoman* comic book series was launched in 2003, featuring artwork by Jim Balent, who is known for his particularly sexy depictions of the character. The series portrayed her as an antiheroine—a thief and criminal who nonetheless followed her own moral code. She also starts in the noteworthy comics miniseries *Catwoman: When in Rome* (2004), by the celebrated team of writer Jeph Loeb and artist Tim Sale.

Recently, in the comics, Catwoman has become Batman's ally. Batman has even confided his secret identity to her, and they have admitted their love for one another. She mostly reformed, although she would still sometimes engage in theft. Starting in 2009 Catwoman co-starred with supervillainesses Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy in the comic book series *Gotham City Sirens,* originally written by Paul Dini. A new *Catwoman* series was launched in September 2011, written by Judd Winick and illustrated by Guillem March.

The latest actress to play Selina Kyle onscreen is Anne Hathaway in director Christopher Nolan's 2012 film *The Dark Knight Rises.* —*ME & PS*

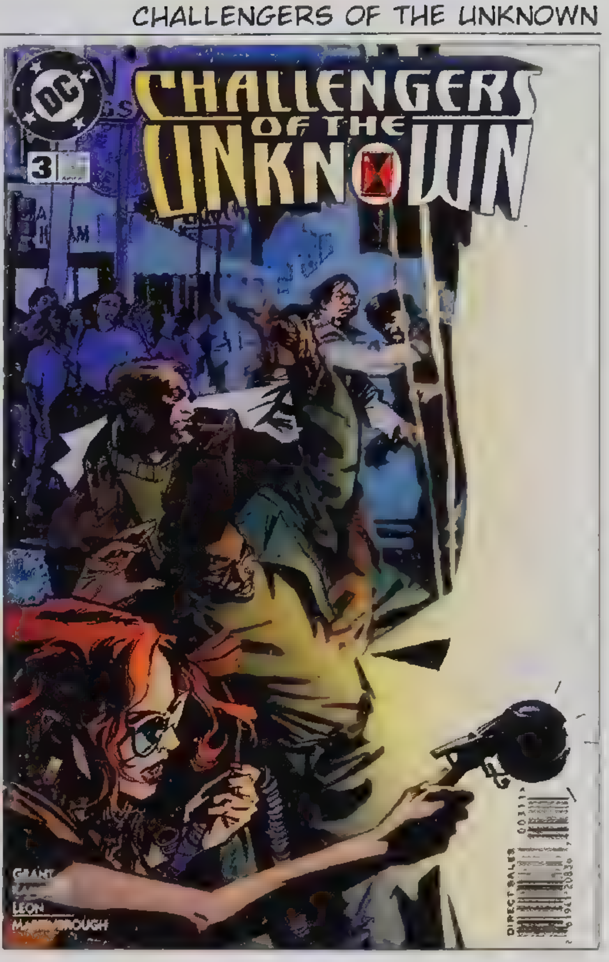
Challengers of the Unknown

Although still published in the twenty-first century, amongst the many thousands of superheroes vying for comic shelf space, the Challengers of the Unknown enjoyed their heyday during the Silver Age of comics (1956–1969). Indeed, after the Flash, Challengers of the Unknown was the second significant superhero creation of this era. After the cancellation of the Justice Society of America in *All Star Comics* in 1951, the newsstands did not carry superhero teams for much of the 1950s, until writer Dave Wood and artist Jack Kirby revived the concept in DC Comics' *Showcase* #6, in early 1957. In an origin sequence that lasts all of two pages, Wood and Kirby revealed how four adventurers on their way to a radio show narrowly avoid death when their airplane is struck by lightning. Climbing from the wreckage, the group decides that since they are living on borrowed time they might as well take whatever risks the world can throw at them and literally "challenge the unknown." As motivations go it was perilously shallow, but nevertheless one page later they were a team and already hot on the heels of their first challenge.

The Challenger lineup included Professor Haley, the thinker of the group; pug-nosed wrestler Rocky Davis; ginger-haired daredevil Red Ryan; and jet pilot Ace Morgan. The group soon added an occasional fifth member, plucky June Robbins, whose main role was to be captured by assorted wrongdoers. After four issues of *Showcase* and eight of their own title, Kirby left for Marvel Comics, but by then he had set the pattern for the team's career. Issue after issue featured the intrepid team taking on an endless parade of aliens, monsters, magicians, robots, and all manner of miscreants from deepest antiquity to the furthest-flung futures. By 1959, the purple-jumpsuited band had mysteriously acquired their own secret hideaway in the Rockies, complete with their own jail and a fleet of planes, helicopters, and cars. They also collected a cadre of arch-enemies, led by the moustached Multi-Man, who gradually grew a large bald head and pointed ears—as supervillains are wont to do—as well as an ever-expanding range of deadly powers. As the 1960s progressed, the prison in Challengers' Mountain filled up with the motliest group of evildoers in comics, including Volcano Man, Brainex, and the truly horrifying Spongeman. Somewhere along the line they lost the constantly imperiled June but gained Cosmo the superpet.

Due to a formula that appealed to a wide readership, the Challengers became something of a blueprint for many future superteams, notably Jack Kirby's world-conquering Fantastic Four of Marvel Comics fame. The Challengers had Professor Haley, the Fantastic Four had Reed Richards. Wrestler Rocky Davis was a clear precursor to the muscle-bound Thing. And, much like June Robbins rounded out the Challenger lineup nicely, so too did Invisible Girl for the Fantastic Four.

And what an adaptable superteam the Challengers were. In the late 1960s, DC discovered horror in a big way, and to cash in on the trend, the Challengers began to investigate the mysterious, and the giant aliens were replaced by ghosts and ghouls. A June look-alike, Corrinna Stark, briefly joined the group, but their heyday was over and the comic was canceled in 1970. A few years later they were back in a short-lived revival that mixed horror and science fiction, presumably going for a crossover market that didn't really exist.



Challengers of the Unknown #3 © 1997 DC Comics. (Cover art by John Paul Leon and Shawn Martinbrough.)

After a very lean spell in the 1980s, the group returned for a couple of startling revamps in the mid-1990s, the first of which saw Challengers' Mountain transformed into a sort of theme park, complete with its own visitors' village. It seems that the group had decided to cash in on their celebrity status by courting the tourist dollar, a plan that was rather undermined when a mysterious villain blew up their hideaway, which then plummeted onto the village below killing the visitors. Understandably upset by this, the foursome split up and all got a bit peculiar, but thankfully they pulled themselves together again just in time to save the world as usual. For the final Challengers series of 1997, the original team were dumped altogether in favor of a new band of heroes who investigated alien sightings and paranormal phenomena in a transparent attempt to hit the *X-Files* market. Despite some of the comic's finest writing and artwork, the revamp failed to find an audience—but it's always only a matter of time before the Fab Four ride the next trend and return to the shelves—as they did in the much-anticipated period piece *The New Frontier,* a retro epic by writer-artist Darwyn Cooke (2004) and Howard Chaykin's 2004–2005 miniseries, collected in trade paperback as *Challengers of the Unknown: Stolen Moments, Borrowed Time. —DAR*

Charlton Heroes

An unauthorized song magazine sent its publisher to "sing-sing." Such is the origin of Charlton Publications, the Derby, Connecticut, outfit known for everything from crossword puzzle periodicals to superhero comic books.

In the early 1930s, Italian immigrant John Santangelo, a bricklayer, was encouraged by a girlfriend to produce a magazine that printed the lyrics to popular songs. His effort landed him behind bars for copyright infringement. In jail, he got a crash course in copyright law, courtesy of fellow inmate Edward Levy, a disbarred lawyer, and the two joined forces upon their release to start a legitimate publishing house, Charlton. They legally obtained the rights to print song lyrics, and in 1945 launched their first magazine—*Hit Parader*—a huge success that became the cornerstone of a line of music titles. Charlton entered the comics business in 1946, mimicking the then-popular market trends of funny animals, science fiction, horror, and crime series.

Santangelo's frugality is legend. Charlton—or Capital Distributing Company, its official name—sliced its production costs by headquartering its editorial, production, distribution, and printing divisions in one plant (Charlton at one time even owned a paper mill). The publisher also paid the lowest page rates in the publishing field, even feeding a few bucks to prisoners for contributions.

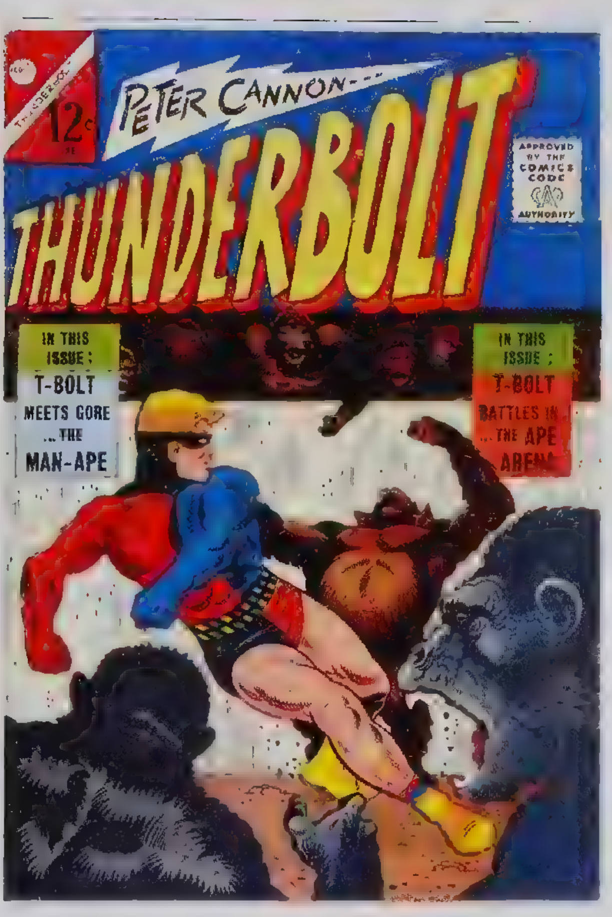
This gift for parsimony helped Charlton stay alive during a mid-1950s comic book market crash. It absorbed properties from other publishers, including Fox Features Syndicate, from which Charlton obtained its first superhero series, *Blue Beetle,* which the company issued briefly during this era before cancellation. Charlton also published the funny-animal superhero comic *Atomic Mouse,* beginning in 1953.

Hurricane Diane nearly decimated Charlton's facilities on August 18, 1955, dumping eleven inches of rain on Derby in the course of a day and sending a surge of flood waters into the building. Some employees narrowly escaped, but managed to salvage the printing press during their hasty exodus. Comics inventory, artwork, and reams of paper did not fare as well. "All of the comic books were turned into papier-mâché," remembered former Charlton and DC Comics editor/artist Dick Giordano in his biography, *Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day at a Time* (2003).

Charlton became the third comic book publisher to release superhero comics during the industry's Silver Age (1956–1969), following DC and Archie Comics' lead. Charlton's nuclear hero, Captain Atom, was first seen in *Space Adventures* #33 (1960). His stint there did not last long, but he was resurrected in the mid-1960s (along with Blue Beetle), as a gadget-wielding, high-tech crime fighter. Soon, Charlton's two superheroes were joined by some not-so-super friends.

"I always preferred heroes who could do things that *we* supposedly would be able to do," revealed Giordano, who was tapped to edit the Charlton superhero titles. He and his creative teams opted for heroes with skills and talents, not superpowers (discounting the preexisting Captain Atom), which he called Charlton's "Action Heroes." Steve Ditko, the original artist of Marvel Comics' *The Amazing Spider-Man,* drew *Blue Beetle, Captain Atom,* and the faceless hero the Question, who appeared as the backup feature in *Beetle.* Other Action Heroes included: Pete "PAM" Morisi's Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt, who relied upon his "powers of the mind"; the Peacemaker, who loved tranquility so much he was willing to fight for it; Nightshade, "Darling of Darkness," the occasional partner of, and backup series in, *Captain Atom;* the iron-fisted Sarge Steel, drawn by editor Giordano; and martial artist Judomaster.

Tightfisted Charlton did not market its Action Heroes during this extremely competitive time for


12¢
PETER CANNON---
THUNDERBOLT
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
IN THIS ISSUE: T-BOLT MEETS GORE ...THE MAN-APE
IN THIS ISSUE: T-BOLT BATTLES IN ...THE APE ARENA

Thunderbolt #52 © 1966 Charlton Comics. (Cover art by Pete Morisi.)

superhero comics, and many titles never made it into the distribution web, with never-opened bundles remaining on delivery trucks and then being returned to the company. The Action Heroes titles were canceled after roughly two years. Giordano is favorably remembered by the writers and artists who produced the Action Heroes titles—Denny O'Neil, Jim Aparo, Joe Gill, Roy Thomas, and others—and believes that his uncharacteristic superhero comics would have performed well if Charlton had supported them.

In the 1970s, Charlton made a few additional forays into superhero publishing. The company licensed stalwarts from the King Features Syndicate and published comic books starring space adventurer Flash Gordon and the jungle hero the Phantom. *Underdog,* based on the animated television cartoon featuring a canine do-gooder who gains powers from popping energy pills, appeared in ten issues of his own Charlton series from 1970 to 1972. Also receiving a ten-issue run was *E-Man,* a lighthearted superhero created by Nick Cuti and Joe Staton in 1973. E-Man was a ball of sentient energy that came to Earth, took human form, and became a superhero who could shoot energy bolts from his fingertips and transform himself into any shape he wanted. His girlfriend, exotic dancer Nova Kane, later became a superheroine herself, known simply as Nova. Although the Charlton *E-Man* series lasted only ten issues, First Comics revived the series in 1983.

The 1980s also brought improvements in the quality of comics production, and the industry's growing reliance upon the "direct market" (selling preordered titles to specialty outlets) began to squeeze Charlton out of business. Giordano had since become the managing editor, then the editorial director, of DC Comics. DC executive Paul Levitz purchased the rights to the Action Heroes as a "gift" for Giordano in 1983; beginning with *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #1 (1985), DC infused Charlton's characters into its universe, with *Blue Beetle, Captain Atom,* and *The Question* receiving monthly titles. The Charlton characters have continued to appear in the DC universe ever since, and *E-Man* has continued to appear from time to time at different comics companies, including one-shots by Cuti and Staton in 2006 and 2007.

Writer Alan Moore originally wanted to use the Action Heroes as the stars of his twelve-issue series *Watchmen* (1986–1987), but was encouraged by Giordano to create original heroes instead. Nonetheless, Moore partly based the main superheroes in *Watchmen* on Charlton heroes: the Comedian on Peacemaker, Dr. Manhattan on Captain Atom, the Nite Owls on the two Blue Beetles, Ozymandias on Peter Cannon, Rorschach on the Question, and Silk Spectre on Nightshade. After a few difficult final years of publishing reprints of its old horror series, and yet failing to penetrate the changing distribution network, Charlton Comics went out of business in 1986.

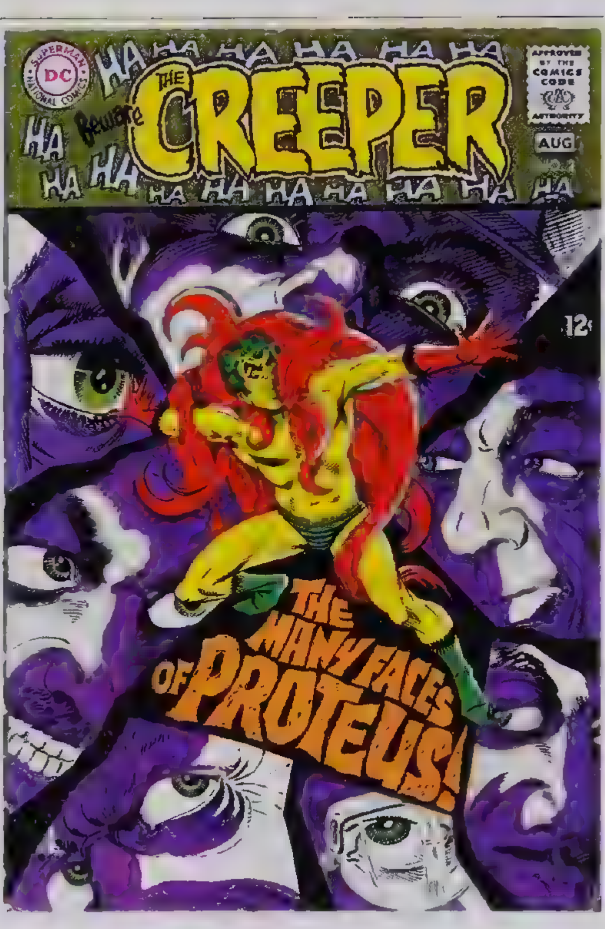
Thanks to his influence on *Watchmen*'s Rorschach, perhaps the Charlton hero with the biggest impact on contemporary comics is the Question. Created by writer/artist Steve Ditko in *Blue Beetle* #1 (June 1967), the Question was really television newsman Vic Sage, who disguised himself with a featureless face mask to combat crime. As with his character Mr. A, Ditko used the Question to express the moral philosophy of Objectivist thinker Ayn Rand; Moore's Rorschach is a more extreme variation on the Question.

In DC's series 52 (2006–2007), the original Question dies and his protégé, former Gotham City policewoman Renee Montoya, becomes the new Question. The final issue of 52 reveals that a version of Ditko's original Question still exists on the parallel Earth known as Earth-4. The original Question, eerily voiced by Jeffrey Combs (of the film *Re-Animator*), appeared in numerous episodes of the animated series *Justice League Unlimited*. He also appears in an episode of the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. —*ME & PS*

The Creeper

When Steve Ditko left Marvel Comics after a disagreement about the direction of his co-creation, Spider-Man, there was no shortage of publishers queuing up to hire him. In the next couple of years, he produced strips for Dell, A.C.G. Tower (Thunder Agents), Warren, Charlton (where he worked on the Blue Beetle and Captain Atom) and, finally, in 1968, DC Comics. At DC he was given the freedom to create and write new superheroes, and he quickly dreamed up the Hawk and the Dove and the Creeper. From a twenty first-century perspective, the Creeper appears in many ways to be just a variation on the sort of story that had made Spider-Man so successful, but at the time it was probably just a little too strange for most comics fans.

The first appearance of the Creeper was in *Showcase* #73 (April 1968), where readers are introduced to manic TV interviewer Jack Ryder, just as he is sacked for haranguing a guest. Newly recruited as a network security agent (a sort of cross between an FBI operative and a TV reporter that probably only existed in the mind of Steve Ditko), Ryder embarks on his first mission—tracking down brilliant scientist Professor Yatz and rescuing him from the clutches of "evil commies." For some reason, these commies throw a fancy dress party, which Ryder crashes wearing an absurd green-and-yellow costume, topped off with a voluminous, red fur collar. Ryder succeeds in finding the Professor, who gives him an instant-healing serum (which also endows him with terrific strength) and a molecular rearranger before (inevitably) being mowed down in a hail of bullets—life for a brilliant scientist tends to be perilous in comics.

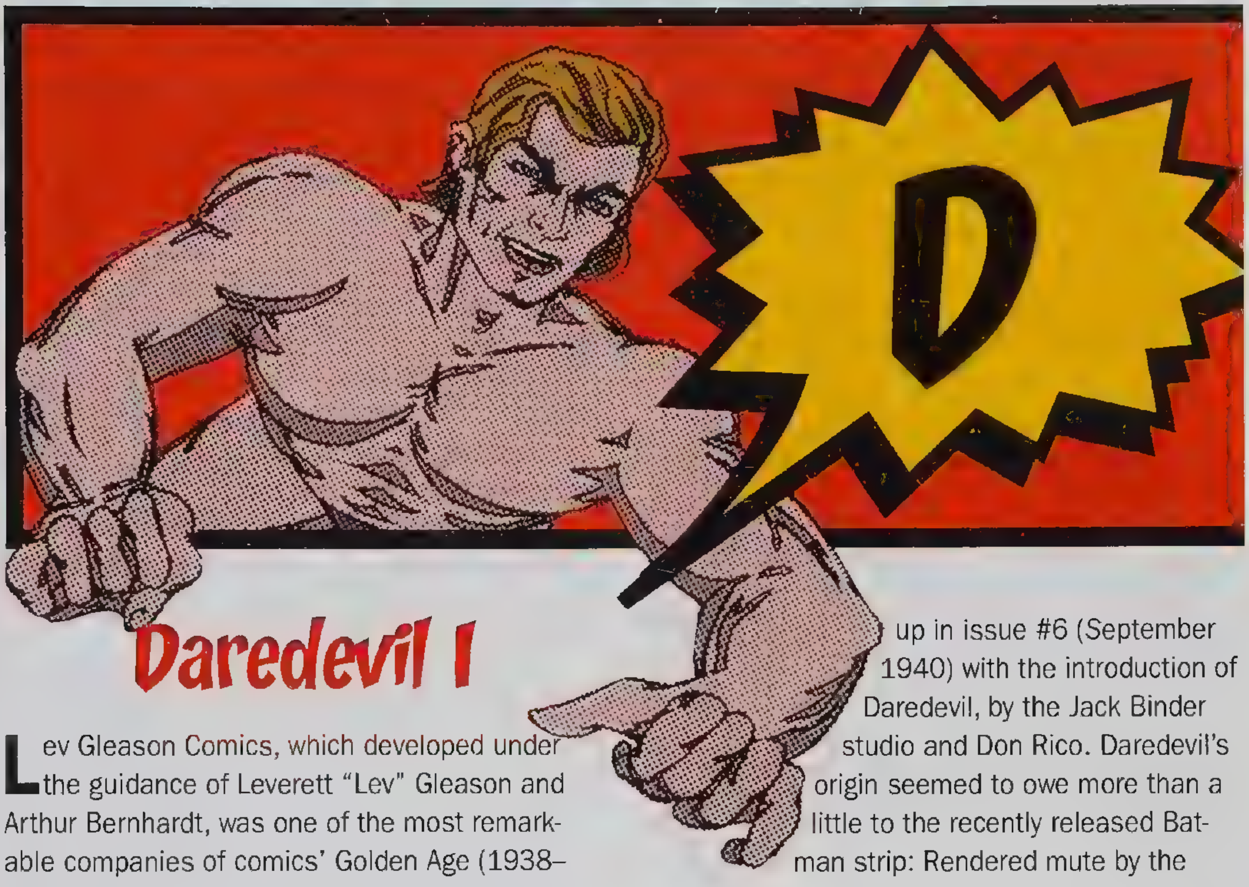

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
DC
Superman National Comics
Beware The CREEPER
Approved by the Comics Code Authority
AUG
12¢
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
THE MANY FACES OF PROTEUS!

The Creeper #2 © 1968 DC Comics. (Cover art by Steve Ditko.)

In his everyday, civilian identity, Ryder was a rather dogmatic, straightlaced person, but in his Creeper guise he became reckless and demented, often terrifying criminals with his maniacal laughter and mad behavior. Consequently, he was as distrusted by a baffled police force as he was by the hordes of the underworld—much as Spider-Man had been, of course. Most of the time, the Creeper was found battling Proteus, an identity-changing criminal with a blank face (like the Spider-Man villain, the Chameleon), but he was also pitted against the likes of the Firefly and the wonderfully christened Yogi Bizerk. Undoubtedly, the comic's major selling points were Ditko's energetic pacing and dynamic drawing, which were the equal of anything on the stands at the time. On the other hand, Ditko's characters appeared to inhabit a strange, timeless world in which people wore berets, Stetsons, or polka-dotted clothes that owed nothing to late 1960s America as his readers knew it.

Following its introduction in *Showcase*, the strip went on to six issues of its own title, but then it was to be several years before the Creeper was heard from again. The mid-1970s saw a rash of new Creeper stories in various Batman comics, which revealed that the Creeper had moved to Gotham City. Ditko himself returned to the Creeper for a one-shot in 1975, which was followed a few years later by a longer run in the pages of *World's Finest Comics*. As is often the case, the 1980s and 1990s saw occasional short stories (as a backup in *The Flash*, for instance) and guest appearances culminating in a very eccentric 1990s series. In 2003 a radical reinvention was released, inspiring a new generation of fans. The new comic is set in the art world of Paris in 1925, and features a mysterious female Creeper who is as much cat burglar as superhero.

Ditko's original Creeper continues to appear in DC Comics, including starring in his own 2006–2007 miniseries and serving a stint as a member of the Outsiders. The Creeper was featured in a 1998 episode of the animated series *The New Batman Adventures* titled "Beware the Creeper!" and made cameo appearances in several episodes of the animated series *Justice League Unlimited*. —*DAR*



Daredevil I

Lev Gleason Comics, which developed under the guidance of Leverett "Lev" Gleason and Arthur Bernhardt, was one of the most remarkable companies of comics' Golden Age (1938–1954), both in terms of its success and its approach to its titles. Both Bernhardt and Gleason were avowedly left-wing publishers with strong socialist roots and a pronounced concern for civic values. They also oversaw one of the real powerhouse publishing houses of the 1940s, with sales of its big three titles—*Daredevil, Boy Comics,* and *Crime Does Not Pay*—in the millions. Unusually, for much of the 1940s the company resisted the temptation to expand its line, concentrating instead on producing high-quality comics, though by the early 1950s it had diversified into the Western, romance, and humor genres. Just as Lev Gleason was one of the decade's most successful comic book companies, it was also among the most controversial, reviled by critics for the brutality and sadism of its comics, and accused of being a communist sympathizer.

In its early days, the company went through several names (Your Guide, Rhoda, and Comic House) and several editors (including future Plastic Man artist Jack Cole). Its flagship title in 1939 was *Silver Streak Comics,* an unremarkable effort enlivened only by a strip drawn by Cole, about a monstrous villain called the Claw. Things picked up in issue #6 (September 1940) with the introduction of Daredevil, by the Jack Binder studio and Don Rico. Daredevil's origin seemed to owe more than a little to the recently released Batman strip: Rendered mute by the shock of seeing his parents killed, Bart Hill builds himself up into a strong, fearless fighter to avenge the wrong done to him. Inspired by a boomerang-shaped scar on his chest (which has been branded by his parents' killers), the young lad practices with a boomerang for years until he becomes a deadly master with the weapon (shades of the Batarang). In a somewhat implausible twist, when Hill dons his Daredevil costume he miraculously regains the power of speech.

With little to differentiate it from its many rivals, the Daredevil strip might have faded into obscurity except that editor Cole had other ideas. With issue #7, he took over the feature and reintroduced a memorable villain. Sensing that his terrifying Claw (a giant, yellow-skinned creature of the night with monstrous talons and teeth) needed a worthy opponent, Cole pitted him against Daredevil in a five-issue epic that thrilled his readers. In issue #7, Cole also redesigned Daredevil's costume into a split red-and-blue bodysuit with a spiked belt and a face-covering cowl, and he ditched the mute ploy. Daredevil would go on to star in *Silver Streak* until issue #17, his later tales being illustrated by Don Rico, but before that his publishers had other plans for the hero.

Enraged and affronted by the rise of Adolf Hitler and the terrifying war in Europe, Gleason and Bernhardt were determined to battle fascism the only way they could, and so pitted their top hero against Hitler himself. *Daredevil Battles Hitler* came out in July 1941, five months before the United States entered the war, and launched the boomerang-toting superhero into a fifteen-year solo career. Initial strips were fast-moving affairs, filled to bursting with such villains as the Ghoul, Professor Venom, the Wizard, Fu Tong and, inevitably, the Claw again. Token girlfriend Tonia Saunders was the *de rigueur* damsel in distress. By this point, the feature was being produced by Charles Biro and Bob Wood, who were elevated to joint editorship by the comic's eleventh issue and immediately overhauled its content and direction, deleting most of the title's backup features.

Charles Biro was a limited, if energetic, artist but a sensational writer, and under his direction *Daredevil, Boy,* and *Crime Does Not Pay* (as *Silver Streak* was renamed) were transformed. In *Daredevil* #13, Biro introduced a gang of teenage runaways, the Little Wise Guys—Scarecrow, Pee Wee, Jock, and Meatball—and the strip began to revolve around their adventures. The new strips were incredibly wordy, dense morality tales, frequently dealing with the problems of youth and small-town life, and they proved absolutely engrossing. Reflecting the social concerns of Gleason and Bernhardt, Biro dealt with such issues as crime, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, child abuse, and doomed romance with gripping energy and surprising candor. Never afraid to break with convention, Biro killed off one of the Little Wise Guys (Meatball) in issue #13, and replaced him with Curly.

Daredevil was soon given a new name, Bill Hart, and (in issue #18) a new origin, in which he was orphaned by an evil uncle and brought up by aborigines in Australia; it was they who taught him his prowess with the boomerang. During the World War II years Daredevil and his gang fought the occasional Japanese invasion force but mostly concentrated on homegrown black-marketeers and hoods, in strips very similar to *Crime Does Not Pay,* the company's biggest seller. However, as the Little Wise Guys grew in popularity, Daredevil became increasingly a spectator in his own comic and, by issue #69, he was gone for good—with the exception of a couple of bizarre appearances in issues #79 and #80 where he and the Wise Guys flew to Mars! Biro handled much of the writing himself, with some help from Robert Bernstein, while the artists were Norman Maurer, William Overgard, Al Borth, Tony Dipreta, and others. Biro wanted his strips to look a particular way—as little use of black as possible, to leave the artwork open for the maximum amount of color—and so there is no mistaking one of his strips. His stories were very distinctive as well, full of well-developed, complex characters, convincing dialogue, and satisfying plots, and it is no surprise that his comics were so popular.

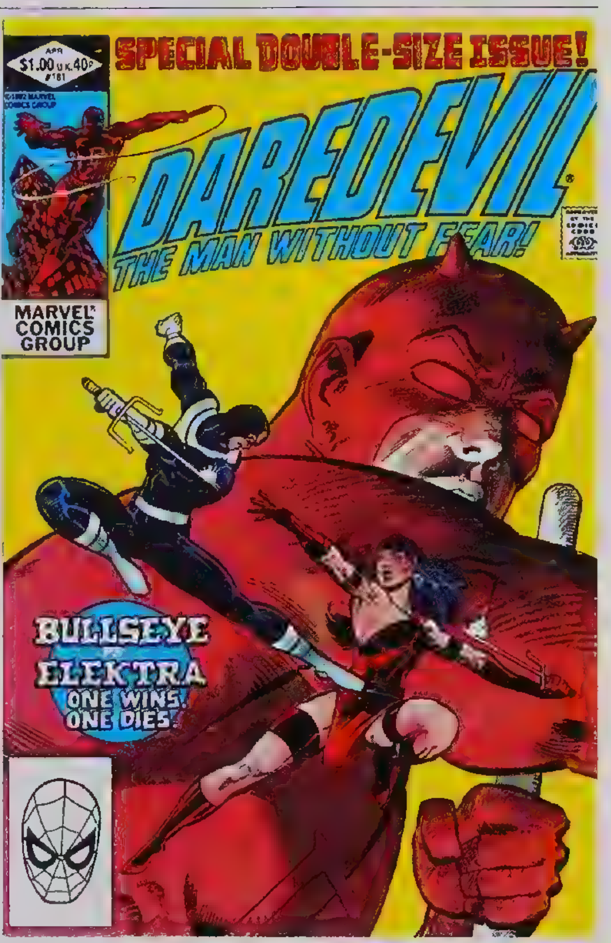
Lev Gleason comics were among the most criticized of the 1950s, and commentators frequently complained that they glamorized crime, citing numerous examples of violence, sadism, and cruelty. The comics were certainly uncompromising, but Gleason's motives were more honorable than his detractors gave him credit for. Nevertheless, he gave up publishing for good in 1956, with the final issue of *Daredevil* (#134) nestling on the newsstands next to DC Comics' *Showcase* #4, which heralded a new era of superheroics, the Silver Age of comics (1956–1969). Had Daredevil returned to his own title, he might well have enjoyed a great comeback along with the rest of *Showcase*'s heroes, but by that point he was long gone. In recent years, Ace and AC Comics have published a few vintage *Daredevil* reprints (with AC even reviving him for occasional outings under the copyright-secure name of "Reddevil"), but for most fans the character's original name belongs to a more well-known superhero published by Marvel Comics.

Since the Golden Age, Daredevil is now in the public domain and anyone can use him (although the name "Daredevil" has been trademarked by Marvel). Writer Roy Thomas renamed the character "Doubledare" when he used him in his 1986 *Alter Ego* comics series. In their *Project Superpowers* comics miniseries, published by Dynamite Entertainment in 2008, collaborators Jim Krueger and artist Alex Ross used numerous public domain superheroes, including the Black Terror, the Fighting Yank, and the Green Lama. They also included the Death-Defying 'Devil, who was based on the Golden Age Daredevil, and who starred in his own miniseries that year. *—DAR & PS*

Daredevil II

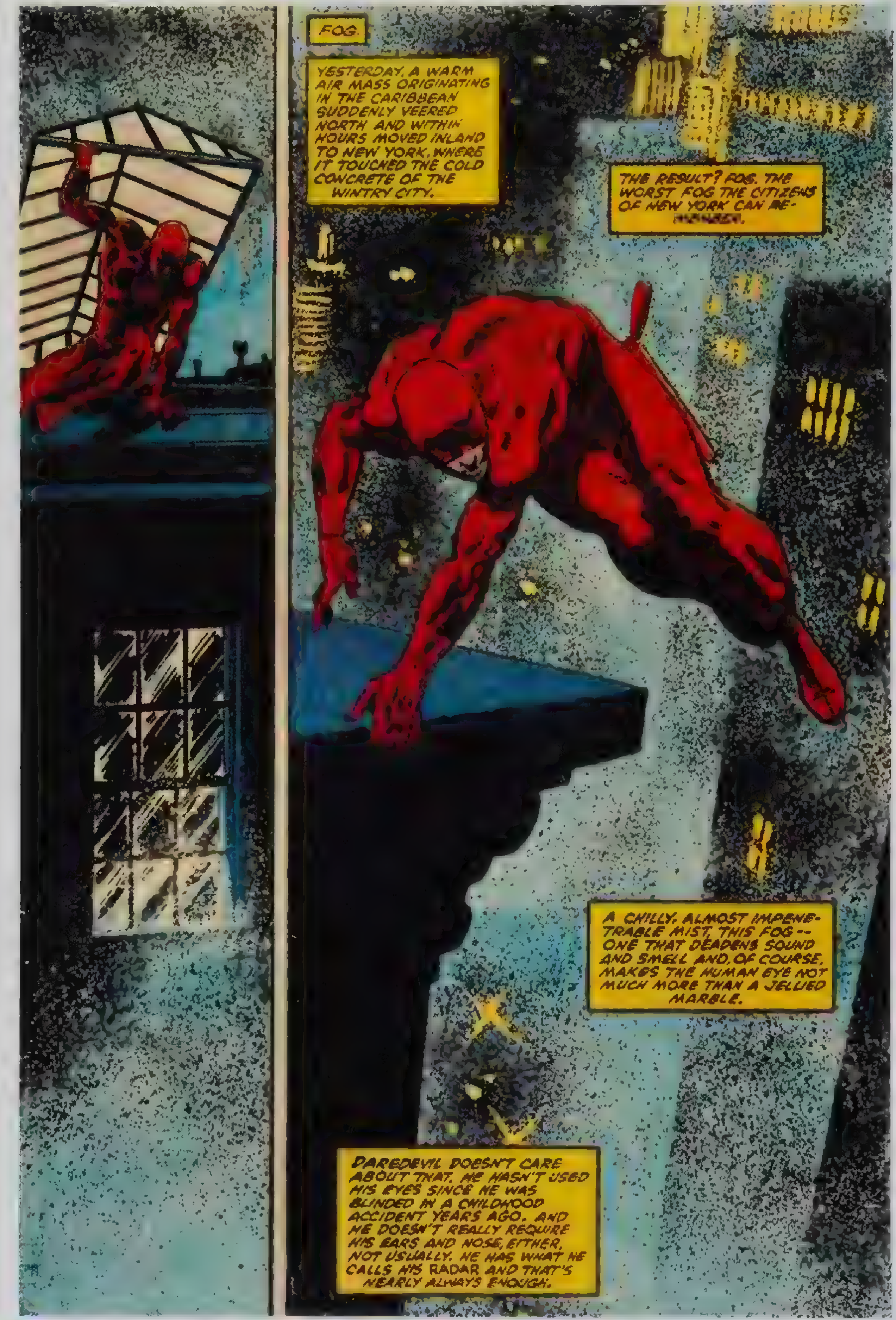
Daredevil, "The Man without Fear," was the last new major Marvel superhero to come out of the comic company's burst of creativity in the 1960s. It took more than fifteen years for the superhero to become a real fan favorite, but he has enjoyed many fine periods since his introduction. The first Daredevil issue appeared in mid-1964 and the character was the first of Marvel's heroes to be created without the input of either super-artists Jack Kirby or Steve Ditko, but he clearly owed a debt to one of writer/editor Stan Lee's biggest successes, Spider-Man. In a story drawn by veteran comics artist Bill Everett, readers were introduced to a wisecracking, yellow-costumed hero with a big "D" on his chest, who swung around the New York City skyline searching out trouble with his "radar sense"—a scenario that fans of the legendary web-slinger would have found all too familiar. But what differentiates Daredevil from his more famous inspiration is that he has a significant handicap: He is blind.

Daredevil's origin, recounted in that first issue, tells of how put-upon bookworm Matt Murdock is blinded by a radioactive canister while rescuing a blind man from the path of an out-of-control truck from the Ajax Atomic Labs. Young Matt, nicknamed "Daredevil" by his high-school tormentors as a jab at his "cowardice" and straggly physique, is the son of washed-up boxer "Battling" Jack Murdock, then on this way back to the big-time through the help of a crooked promoter known, rather suspiciously, as the Fixer. Throughout high school and college, Matt builds himself up physically, aided by his heightened senses (a side effect of the accident that more than compensates for his blindness), and when his dad is killed after refusing to throw a fight, he dons a costume and becomes Daredevil, vowing to bring his father's killers to justice. In addition to his "razor sharp" senses that can hear someone else's heart beating, never forget an odor once it is smelled, tell how many bullets are in a gun by its weight, and distinguish color by its feel, Daredevil's innocent-looking blind man's cane contains a grappling hook and cable for scaling walls. On being confronted by the imposing figure of Daredevil, the Fixer promptly dies of a heart attack, so establishing early on the terrifying effect the hero has on criminals.



Daredevil #181 © 1982 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Frank Miller.)

The first issue also established the strip's supporting cast: Murdock's partner in his law firm, Franklin "Foggy" Nelson, and their beautiful, blonde secretary Karen Page; thus was the classic love triangle set in place. Over the following decade, Lee and other writers built up a formidable and bizarre rogues' gallery for Daredevil, including the Owl, Mr. Fear, Stiltman, the Gladiator, the Ox, Kilgrave the Purple Man, the Jester, and Leapfrog, among many others. The strip also


FOG.
YESTERDAY, A WARM AIR MASS ORIGINATING IN THE CARIBBEAN SUDDENLY VEERED NORTH AND WITHIN HOURS MOVED INLAND TO NEW YORK, WHERE IT TOUCHED THE COLD CONCRETE OF THE WINTRY CITY.
THE RESULT? FOG. THE WORST FOG THE CITIZENS OF NEW YORK CAN REMEMBER.
A CHILLY, ALMOST IMPENETRABLE MIST, THIS FOG -- ONE THAT DEADENS SOUND AND SMELL AND, OF COURSE, MAKES THE HUMAN EYE NOT MUCH MORE THAN A JELLIED MARBLE.
DAREDEVIL DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THAT. HE HASN'T USED HIS EYES SINCE HE WAS BLINDED IN A CHILDHOOD ACCIDENT YEARS AGO. AND HE DOESN'T REALLY REQUIRE HIS EARS AND NOSE, EITHER. NOT USUALLY. HE HAS WHAT HE CALLS HIS RADAR AND THAT'S NEARLY ALWAYS ENOUGH.

boasted some of the finest talents in comics, including Wally Wood (who introduced Daredevil's famous all-red costume in issue #7), John Romita, and Gene Colan, who would draw the feature well into the 1970s. In typical Marvel fashion, where Daredevil was a fast-talking joker, Murdock was tortured and morose, petrified that his secret identity would be discovered and unable to reveal his true feelings to his seductive secretary. Indeed, to cover up his secret life as a costumed hero, Matt created a fictitious twin brother, the obnoxious egomaniac Mike Murdock, whom he impersonated for almost two years. Throughout the deception, Foggy and Page were convinced that Mike was actually Daredevil, but by the decade's end Matt finally revealed the truth to Page, who promptly fled to Los Angeles to become an actress.

Throughout the early 1970s, Daredevil acquired a new love, ex KGB agent and slinky superheroine Natasha Romanova, a.k.a. the Black Widow, and the pair relocated to swinging San Francisco. After four years of well-crafted crime fighting, including a period when the Widow received equal cover billing, the pair split, with Murdock returning to Foggy in New York and Romanova joining the short-lived supergroup the Champions. While by no means one of Marvel's top-selling titles, the comic of this period was nonetheless invariably one of the company's most readable books, with consistently fine art from Gene Colan, Bob Brown, and rising star inker Klaus Janson. One 1976 issue (#133) even guest-starred celebrity paranormalist Uri Geller, but a more significant development was the introduction two months earlier of the deadly sureshot villain Bullseye, who could make literally anything into a weapon.

In 1979, *Daredevil* issue #158 saw the introduction of a promising young artist by the name of Frank Miller. He took over scriptwriting two issues later, transforming the comic into a fan favorite and changing its direction forever. Miller's art was both cinematic and atmospheric, with a terrific knack of grabbing the reader's attention and not letting go. Miller's first act as writer was to introduce a mysterious female assassin called Elektra, a deadly Ninja-trained bounty hunter working for the evil Kingpin. But, to confuse things, she had also been Murdock's first love, and over the course of the next few years, their complicated and deadly fascination with each other inspired a fanatical following. What had once been just another comic to most readers was now, unquestionably, the most talked-about title in the United States. Miller became the first creative star of the 1980s and the strip's searing, dark, violent, and explosive direction was mimicked across the comics industry.

From *Daredevil* #220 © 1985 Marvel Comics.

From issue #168 to his last hurrah in issue #191, Miller wove an ongoing, elaborate saga involving the Kingpin, Elektra, assorted Ninjas, an increasingly psychotic Bullseye, and numerous lowlifes and gangsters. In his hands (aided greatly by the talented Janson), New York became almost a character in its own right, with Miller delighting in delineating its totemic water towers, forests of skyscrapers, and fetid backstreets. He also greatly expanded the feature's supporting cast, introducing the chain-smoking *Daily Bugle* reporter Ben Urich (who guesses Daredevil's true identity) and the blind derelict known only as Stick, a Zen master who had tutored the teenage Murdock in developing his heightened senses. In the course of the epic, Bullseye went mad and Elektra was killed off, although in a final act Miller resurrected her, much to fans' relief. Elektra's popularity inspired a wildly well-received 1986 miniseries written by Miller and painted by Bill Sienkiewicz, and as of 2004 nine different Elektra titles (including reprints and miniseries) have appeared.

In 1983, Miller moved over to DC Comics, where he would create another of the decade's standout titles, *The Dark Knight Returns* (also with Janson's inks); Marvel found him a hard act to follow. In time, another emerging artist, future *New Yorker* star David Mazzucchelli, joined the title and soon began to make waves with a beguiling combination of Colan77's fluidity and Miller's atmospherics. An increasingly popular run was capped, in 1986, by the return of Miller on scripts, resulting in the "Born Again" storyline (in issues #227–#233), which, if anything, surpassed the comic's earlier triumphs. The story saw the return of the long-forgotten Karen Page, now a faded starlet

Ben Affleck takes on the role of the title character in the 2003 movie *Daredevil*, with support from Jennifer Garner as Elektra. (20th Century-Fox/Marvel / The Kobal Collection / Rosenthal, Zade.)

and abject drug addict, who had sold Daredevil's secret identity for the price of a "hit." In the coming months, the Kingpin systematically destroyed Murdock's career, reputation, friendships, and almost his life, but salvation appeared in the form of a nun who rescued the derelict and dying hero. The story's denouement reunited a drug-free Page with Murdock, revealed that the nun was in fact his long-lost mother, and established a new life for America's favorite hero, helping the poor of New York's Hell's Kitchen.

In an ideal world, the comic would have ended there—as close to perfection as any superhero comic has a right to be—but, of course, with high sales and an enthusiastic readership, that was never going to happen. Miller and Mazzuchelli left to create the legendary *Batman Year One* series, and their Daredevil successors have effectively based their work on this period ever since. In 2003, the live-action feature film *Daredevil* was released to strong box-office and general critical acclaim, particularly from fans who hailed it as one of the most convincing superhero films to date. The film starred Ben Affleck as Daredevil and Jennifer Garner as Elektra; with a supporting cast of Bullseye, the Kingpin, Foggy, and Ben Urich, it is very much based on Miller's vision of the comic.

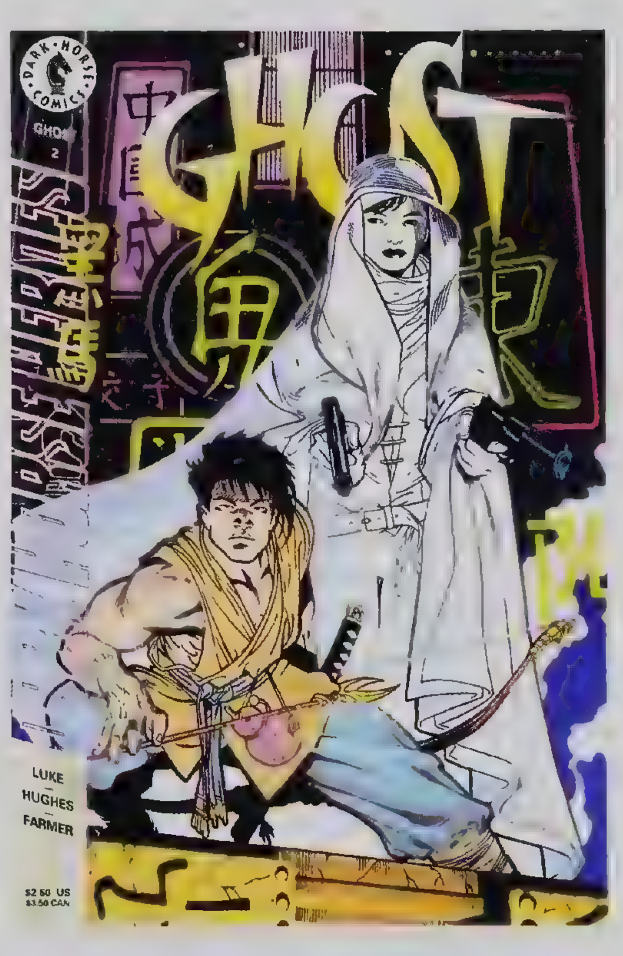
The film featured bravura fight scenes and a stunning visualization of Murdock's radar-vision. Fans appreciated the red leather costume that was fairly faithfully realized, as well as the peppering of cameo appearances from real-life comic creators Stan Lee, Frank Miller, and Kevin Smith. Affleck had little to do but look grim in the Daredevil costume, but as Murdock, he played blindness credibly and presented a sympathetic man who retained a sense of humor despite being physically tortured due to his punishing good deeds. Less popular with fans was the reimagining of Kingpin as an African-American villain instead of a Caucasian crime lord, and the lack of traditional costume for either Elektra or Bullseye. Instead of Elektra's red (or white) ninja gear, Garner wore dark leather, while Farrell's Bullseye traded in blue-and-white tights for a tank-top, trenchcoat, and tough-guy forehead scar.

In the post-Miller era, Ann Nocenti teamed up with artist John Romita Jr. (whose father had made his Marvel debut with Daredevil some two decades earlier) for a long run on the comic. Nocenti introduced another female assassin, the schizophrenic Typhoid Mary, brought back the Kingpin, and pitted Daredevil against Marvel's own version of the devil, Mephisto. That team's successors, Dan Chichester and Lee Weeks, revisited the "Born Again" era, right down to the comic's artwork, Murdock's mental breakdown, and the villainy of the Kingpin (yet again). In the 1990s readers were presented with more mental breakdowns, a new Kevlar-armored costume, the return of the hero's mother, his old costume, a brief stint with the secret organization S.H.I.E.L.D., and Daredevil's old pal Stick. By this point, Miller's reinvention of the hero as a dark, tormented, unstable character had permeated the industry to such an extent that strips as diverse as Aquaman, Green Arrow, and Ghost Rider had been given a makeover, and Daredevil was now just one of the crowd.

In 1998, after 380 issues, Marvel decided to relaunch the strip from #1 as part of its more mature Marvel Knights line, and recruited cult film director Kevin Smith as writer and soon-to-be new Marvel boss Joe Quesada on art. Smith and his successor Brian Michael Bendis succeeded in making fans sit up and take notice by introducing a new twist—possibly unique in the genre—of revealing Daredevil's secret identity to the world. Following an unsuccessful coup attempt against the Kingpin (him again!), former deputy Mr. Silke turned himself in to the FBI, revealing to them the one bargaining chip he had: the knowledge that Matt Murdock is Daredevil. Within a day, news leaked out to the *Daily Globe*, which splashed the revelation to a startled nation. Murdock and Foggy Nelson (who learned of Murdock's secret some years earlier), back together again as law firm partners, responded with a $400 million lawsuit, but no one was convinced by their denials. With Bendis and the photorealistic Alex Maleev creating riveting stories and a strong fan following, *Daredevil* once more became one of the industry's most innovative and talked-about comics. Ed Brubaker and later Andy Diggle have succeeded Bendis as *Daredevil* writers. —*DAR*

Dark Horse Heroes

Mike Richardson, owner of a successful chain of comics shops in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area, was dissatisfied with the caliber of material being produced in the mid-1980s, and invested in a highly risky venture: publishing his own comic book line. Dedicated to producing quality projects with diversified subjects, *and* to giving major publishers Marvel and DC Comics a run for their money, his tenaciously named Dark Horse Comics charged out of the gate in 1986 with its black-and-white anthology series, *Dark Horse Presents* (*DHP*). Paul Chadwick's *Concrete* and Chris Warner's *Black Cross* were featured in *DHP* #1, two nontraditional strips featuring nontraditional heroes. True to Richardson's vision,



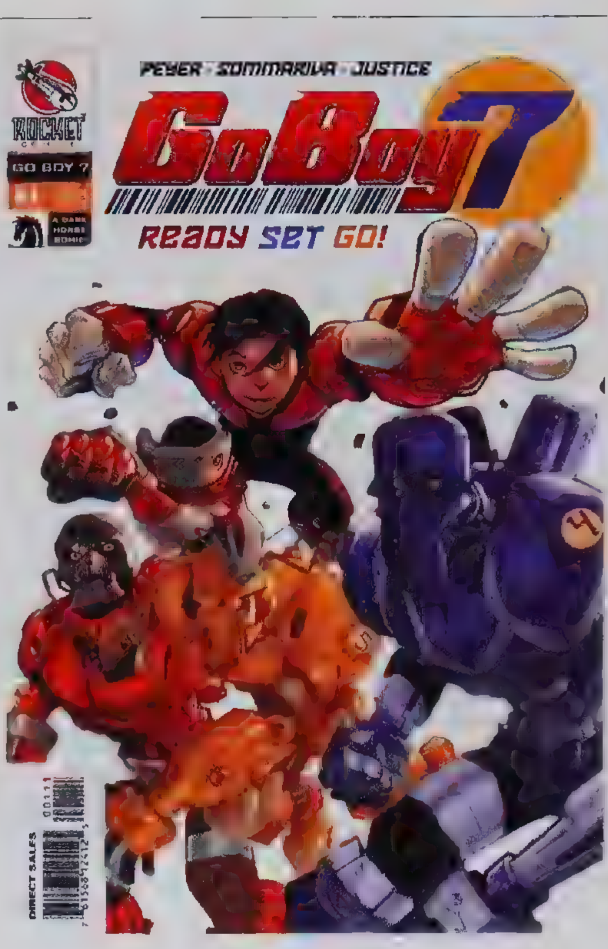
Ghost #2 ™ & © 1995 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. (Cover art by Adam Hughes.)

those stories were miles above standard B&W fare and rivaled the quality of the best comic books then being published by the majors. *Concrete* and *Black Cross* helped Dark Horse define a template that would direct the path of the company's heroes to follow—a nurturing of creative’ vision and a drive to be different.

Richardson, abetted by editorial second-in-command Randy Stradley, expanded the Dark Horse line in the late 1980s with licensed titles, continuing the sagas of Twentieth Century-Fox's *Aliens* and *Predator* movies in best-selling comic books. The promise of lucrative royalties lured top talent to these upstart's books, and before long, big-name creators anxious to break free of the corporate restraints of Marvel and DC Comics were bringing their personal wares to Dark Horse.

John Byrne, a fan favorite from his work on *X-Men, Fantastic Four, The Incredible Hulk,* and *Superman,* came knocking on Dark Horse's door, in 1992, with his original superhero concept *The Next Men*. This series, an homage to Marvel's *X-Men,* featured a quintet of mutates who flee from the top-secret "Project Next Men" and struggle to adjust to the real world while avoiding their pursuers. Byrne followed his thirty-issue stint on *Next Men* with his short-lived *Fantastic Four* pastiche, *Danger Unlimited*. The new comics company IDW began reprinting *John Byrne's Next Men* in 2008, and subsequently published new *Next Men* stories by Byrne.

Also in 1992, Dark Horse picked up *Grendel,* Matt Wagner's bleak but compelling study of aggression that originated in the late 1980s at Comico the Comic Company, for a lengthy run of irregularly published miniseries and one-shots. On two occasions, Wagner's creation encountered the Dark Knight in DC/Dark Horse *Batman/Grendel* crossovers. Grendel is in development as a movie, with a release date yet to be unannounced.



Go Boy 7 #1 ™ & © 2003 Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
(Cover art by Francisco Ruiz Velasco.)

Eccentric cartoonist Bob Burden transplanted his bizarre superhero comic books *The Flaming Carrot* and its spinoff *Mysterymen Stories* to Richardson's company in the mid-1990s. The latter property became a movie produced by Dark Horse Entertainment: *Mystery Men* (1999) featured a band of low-rent superheroes, including Mr. Furious (Ben Stiller), the Bowler (Janeane Garofalo), Captain Amazing (Greg Kinnear), the Shoveller (William H. Macy), and the Spleen (Paul Reubens). Despite its impressive cast and a wickedly satirical script, *Mystery Men* tanked at the box office. Another established independent superhero series that temporarily relocated to Dark Horse was Mike Baron and Steve Rude's *Nexus,* a critically lauded science fiction concept -inspired in part by Rude's fascination with the television cartoon *Space Ghost*—which featured the exploits of an intergalactic executioner. Similarly, Mike Allred's snappy beatnik-hero concept, *Madman Comics,* was picked up by Dark Horse in the mid-1990s and stayed there until late 2000.

Creator Mike Mignola's *Hellboy,* the story of an orphaned demon, debuted at Dark Horse in 1994. Mignola's stylish, shadowy rendering and his flair for having fun with dark subjects struck a chord with readers. Numerous *Hellboy* miniseries and specials have appeared, as has some merchandising, and director Guillermo del Toro's live-action feature *Hellboy,* starring Ron Perlman (of TV's *Beauty and the Beast*), was released in April 2004—just in time for the character's tenth anniversary. A sequel, *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, was released in 2008.

Dark Horse had made a name for itself publishing *other* people's characters: creator-owned series and licensed titles (*Godzilla, Terminator, Tarzan, Star Wars,* and other properties joined *Aliens* and *Predator*). When Richardson, Stradley, and their editorial staff decided to produce superhero comics all their own, they were determined to create superheroes unlike any other publisher's.

Dark Horse's first company-created superhero—the Mask—first appeared in *Dark Horse Presents* #11 (1987), quite early in the company's history. A twisted, graphic melding of Bugs Bunny and the Terminator, the original Mask is actually poor schmuck Stanley Ipkiss, who buys a bizarre ancient mask and gains *Looney Tunes*–inspired superpowers, and then uses these abilities to slaughter his tormentors. The Mask made repeated appearances, with other unlucky souls gaining the artifact and its dangerous properties, before heading to the big screen (albeit in a watered-down, family-friendly incarnation) with *The Mask* (1994), a film co-produced by Richardson, with Jim Carrey in the lead. *The Mask* was a summer box-office hit, and an animated series and loads of action figures followed.

Brand-new superhero universes flooded comics shops in the early 1990s, the result of a speculator-fueled sales boom. Dark Horse entered this competition for market share in 1993 with its boastfully named "Comics' Greatest World" (CGW), which situated new heroes in four distinctive environments: Arcadia, an art deco–inspired Mecca for mobsters; Steel Harbor, a bombed-out urban landscape overrun by superthugs; Golden City, a picture-perfect megalopolis governed by superheroes; and Cinnabar Flats, the sparsely populated, Southwest desert location of an interdimensional vortex and a top-secret military installation. Sixteen titles (four in each environment, bargain-priced at one dollar each), were released to introduce the cities and their stars.

This baptismal gimmick was succeeded by a quartet of ongoing monthly series, each deeper in content than the standard superfare. *Catalyst, Agents of Change,* set in Golden City, dealt with the woes of a utopian gated community, including the U.S. government's suspicions over its autocracy and an influx of persistent would-be immigrants. *X,* the Arcadia title, was a violent study of a lone vigilante's efforts to unravel the city's corruption. *Out of the Vortex,* based in Cinnabar Flats, focused on the dubious motivations of an extraterrestrial called Vortex who emerged from the region's strange whirlpool, as well as the military's efforts to take advantage of alien nanotechnology. Finally, Steel Harbor's *Barb Wire* starred a hard-hitting, motorcycling lady brawler.

Other series and specials were released to help strengthen Comics' Greatest World, featuring superheroes cut from a more cerebral cloth: *The Machine,* featuring a horrific tech/flesh fusion; *Motorhead,* a heavily tattooed, muscle-bound bar bouncer haunted by voices implanted into his head; *Titan,* an arrogant superman with few mental gifts; *Mecha,* a freewheeling iron man; *Hero Zero,* a teenage boy who morphed into a Japanese-robot-inspired giant (he even fought the King of Monsters in *Godzilla vs. Hero Zero*); *Division 13,* an *X-Files*-esque task force; *Agents of Law,* a *Catalyst* sequel with Golden City leader Grace deposed from her own city; and *Ghost,* a moody series involving a sexy, gun-toting wraith butchering Arcadia's bad boys.

X, written by Steven Grant, was a modest hit, and Steel Harbor's "babe on wheels" became a movie star—in the ample (and heavily exploited) form of Pamela Anderson—in *Barb Wire* (1996), a poorly received movie borrowing the comic's tag line: "Don't Call Me Babe!" The one success of these Dark Horse heroes was *Ghost.* Initially scripted by screenwriter Eric Luke (*Explorers*), with lushly rendered covers and interior art by comics' most celebrated "Good Girl" artist, Adam Hughes, *Ghost* ran through 2000. Dark Horse produced a Ghost action figure and three crossovers involving the character: *Ghost/Batgirl* (with DC Comics), *Ghost/Hellboy,* and *Ghost and the Shadow.*

Despite Dark Horse's valiant efforts, the comics industry became glutted in the mid-

1990s and imploded. After a 1994 attempt to reimagine "Comics' Greatest World" as "Dark Horse Heroes," the titles (save *Ghost*), were canceled, one by one. As a result, Dark Horse continues in the 2000s as a smaller, more tightly run comics machine, counting the *Star Wars* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* franchises, *Hellboy*, and American-distributed Japanese manga series like *Ghost in the Shell* as its most successful properties. In 2003, Dark Horse launched a new line of superhero titles under its "Rocket Comics" imprint: *Go Boy 7, Hell, Syn, Galactic, Lone,* and *Crush,* youth-oriented concepts with contemporary themes and in-your-face characters. Given Dark Horse's persistence and flair for originality, Rocket may very well succeed where CGW didn't.

In Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize–winning novel about the early days of the comic book industry, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (2000), protagonists Joe Kavalier and Sam Clay create a comic book superhero called the Escapist. In 2004, Dark Horse began publishing the comic book series *Michael Chabon Presents the Amazing Adventures of the Escapist.* This series purportedly presented Escapist comics stories that were published over the decades in the fictional world of Chabon's novel. Of course, the stories were actually created in the present by Chabon and various comics writers and artists, including a tale by the late Will Eisner that teamed the Escapist up with his creation the Spirit. In 2006, Brian K, Vaughan wrote a comics miniseries called *The Escapists,* a metafictional sequel to Chabon's novel, about an attempt to revive the Escapist in contemporary comics.

Gerard Way, co-founder and lead singer of the band My Chemical Romance, writes the award-winning superhero comics series *The Umbrella Academy,* which he co-created with artist Gabriel Ba. Raised and trained by an alien known as the Monocle, now deceased, the Academy members include Spaceboy, the Kraken, the Rumor, Seance, the Boy, the Horror (also now dead), and the White Violin, who becomes a supervillainess. Dark Horse started publishing the original mini-series in 2007 and the second in 2008. —*ME & PS*

Deadman

Despite never gaining the high sales it deserved, Deadman has been one of the most influential and critically acclaimed characters in superhero comics. Deadman was conceived by maverick writer Arnold Drake in 1967 and first appeared in the pages of *Strange Adventures* #205, in what was to be artist Carmine Infantino's last strip before becoming editor-in-chief of DC Comics. The tale starts with the death of its star, Boston Brand, a daredevil trapeze artist assassinated by a sniper in the middle of his act. But death is not the end for Brand, as a disembodied voice (of Rama Krishna, a sort of god) tells him that to avenge his death he must roam the earth in ghostly form until he finds his killer. Unfortunately, the only clue to the killer's identity is that he has a hook on his arm, but Brand now has the convenient ability to enter people's bodies and take them over.

The strip was blessed with an unusual setting—Brand's circus with its colorful performers—an intriguing quest at its heart, and an unconventional, complex hero. Brand was an argumentative, egotistical, and somewhat self-pitying character who, despite his powers and stylish costume (as a ghost, he still wore his acrobat's red high-wire outfit, complete with white death's-head mask), was no better than the reader. In 1967, this was revolutionary content and in retrospect Brand can be seen as the first "mature" superhero. Another revolutionary factor in the strip's critical appeal was the art of Neal Adams, who took over the feature for its second installment. Adams came to the strip from the world of advertising and newspaper strips, and brought a realism to comic books that had never been seen before. He also had a gift for dynamic drawing and stylish design; Deadman was peppered with pop-art effects and witty in-jokes. In short, this was a very cool comic.

Over the next two years, Deadman roamed the country endlessly, tracking down the Hook in what was very much the comic book equivalent of the 1960s television show *The Fugitive.* In his travels, he came across supervillains (such as the Eagle), drug pushers, Batman, and a group of killers called

DC
DEADMAN
6
Love & DEATH

Deadman #6 © 2002 DC Comics. (Cover art by José Luis Garcia Lopez.)

the League of Assassins. The strip's complexity and depth were perhaps too much to take for most readers, and after its twelfth installment, the series was canceled. Undeterred by this, Adams went on to draw further Deadman appearances in numerous comics, including *Aquaman, The Justice League, The Brave and the Bold,* and *Challengers of the Unknown.* Editors finally revealed Deadman's killer to be an assassin in the pay of a mysterious criminal called Sensei, and the pair went on to tangle with each other throughout the 1970s.

While it is true that Deadman was then relegated to a relatively minor status, he nevertheless continued to appear in backup spots in *Adventure Comics* and *Phantom Stranger,* which were notable for their high quality. A 1986 miniseries—the first of six relaunches as of 2004—drawn by José Luis Garcia Lopez (Adams' talented successor on the strip), featured a final showdown with Sensei. The strip showed Deadman finally regaining his human form only to lose it again, vowing to continue his fight against evil, wherever it may appear. For a while later on in the decade, DC repositioned him as a horror character, now looking more like a living skeleton than a well-toned superhero, but recent miniseries have been very much in the intelligent, elegant tradition of Deadman's early days.

As a commercial project, the strip has never rewarded DC's continued faith in it, though the publisher has repackaged the Adams run on several occasions, as have several European publishers (the feature is highly regarded across Europe). But in introducing the concept of "serious" superhero strips, Deadman was clearly the precursor to the likes of *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns,* and it is now widely viewed as one of the key strips of the 1960s. Deadman joined the title team in the comic book series *Justice League Dark,* which debuted in September 2011. —*DAR*

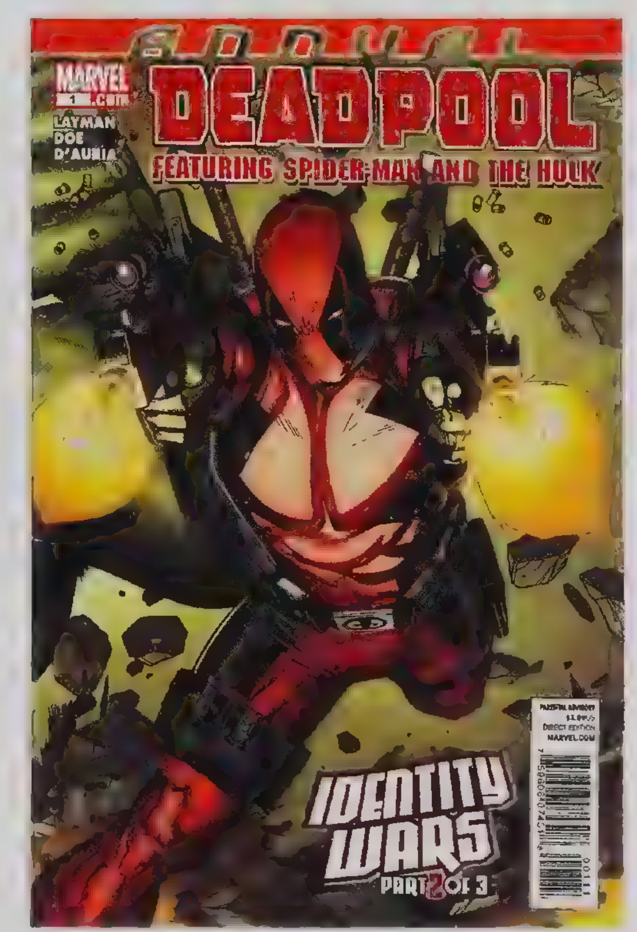
Deadpool

Deadpool is a prime example of a supervillain who not only evolved into an antihero but also became a star of his own comic books. Created by artist Rob Liefeld and writer Fabian Nicieza, Deadpool debuted in Marvel's *New Mutants* #98 (February 1991), as a costumed mercenary hired to kill the New Mutants and their leader Cable. Deadpool went on to appearances in X-Force and other Marvel titles and became surprisingly popular with the readers. Probably this was because Deadpool became known as the "Merc with a Mouth," since he keeps up a constant stream of wisecracks and banter, as if he were a crazed criminal version of Spider-Man. Deadpool starred in his first comics miniseries in 1993, and graduated to his first ongoing series in 1997. Ever since then, Deadpool has appeared in numerous series of his own and made guest appearances in other Marvel series.

As Deadpool became a star in his own right, he became more of an antihero than a true villain. Sometimes he still operates as a criminal, but other times he teams up with superheroes, as in the *Cable & Deadpool* series (2004–2008), which paired him with a man he had once been hired to kill. In 2011 he joined the superhero team X-Force.

Deadpool stories have strong satiric elements, and Deadpool, like John Byrne's version of the She-Hulk, frequently "breaks the fourth wall": he knows he is in a comic book, and will directly talk to the reader.

Deadpool's real name is (or possibly is not) Wade Wilson. Suffering from cancer, Wilson volunteered to undergo experiments at the United States government's Weapon X program, which was attempting to create the equivalent of Wolverine's superhuman self-healing ability. The experiments initially, severely disfigured Wilson's face and left him mentally unstable. As a result, Wilson was confined in a facility for rejects from the Weapon X program. There the other inmates gambled in a "deadpool" on who would die next, and they bet that Wilson would die soon. But instead Wilson survived: he developed the healing factor that is his principal superpower, enabling him to recover rapidly from virtually any injury, thus making him virtually unkillable (though he remains disfigured and insane). Adopting the name Deadpool, he became the costumed mercenary who first appeared in *New Mutants*.



Deadpool #1 © 2011 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Steve McNiven, Mark Morales, and Marte Gracia.)

Deadpool made his live action film debut in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009), in which Ryan Reynolds plays Wade Wilson before he gets his superpowers, and Scott Adkins plays him after he becomes the disfigured Deadpool. In 2011 a *Deadpool* feature film was being developed, in which Reynolds was slated to play the title role. —*PS*

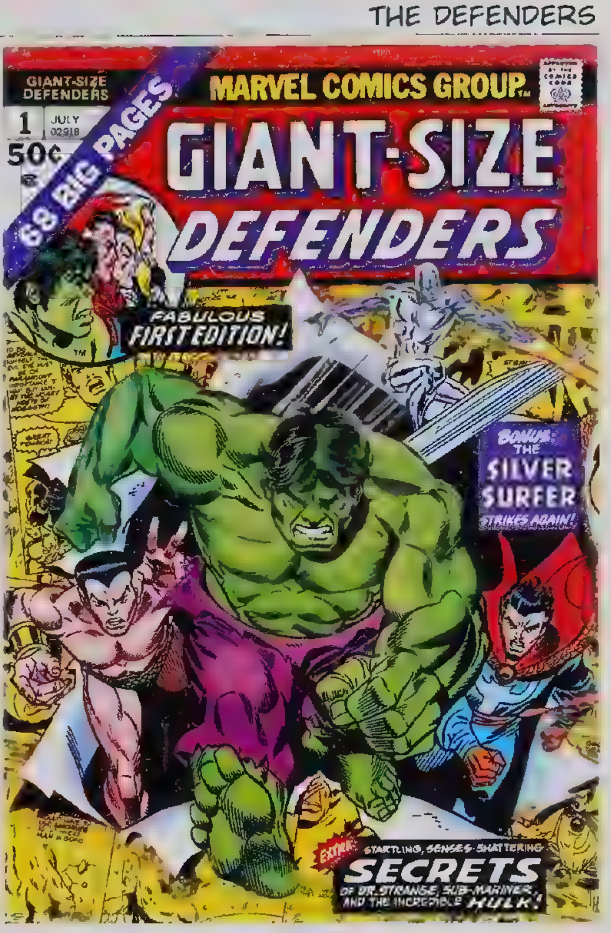
The Defenders

When is a team not a team? When they are a non-team. That, at least, was the logic behind the Defenders, a grouping of Marvel Comics' misfits, loners, and losers that met with unexpected success and acclaim. Like DC Comics' All-Star Squadron, the Defenders characters sometimes belong to other superhero groups, but can still hold membership within the team; however, most Defenders are offbeat and eternally team-less, or series-less, characters who unite out of necessity and disband at whim. The seeds of the group were sown in two 1970 issues of *Sub-Mariner* (#34 and #35), by writer Roy Thomas and artist Sal Buscema, in which the Sub-Mariner recruits the nearby Hulk and Silver Surfer to help him destroy a rogue weather-controlling device. Naturally enough, the three "collaborators" end up fighting both each other and the Avengers, but the combination of such seemingly incompatible characters struck a chord with both Thomas and the fans. Later the next year, Thomas brought the Sub-Mariner and the Hulk back together, teaming them this time with Dr. Strange, as the group the Defenders, for a three-issue run in the new *Marvel Feature* title. As in the Sub-Mariner strip, the three super heroes came together to dispose of an Earth-destroying device, in this case the Omegatron, created by dying sorcerer Yandroth. While they parted company at the end of the first issue, the pattern was set for adventures to come.

Shortly after the third issue of *Marvel Feature*, the Defenders were promoted to their own comic (August 1972), with new writer Steve Englehart and Sal Buscema on art (a role that he would hold for the next forty issues). Almost from the outset, the team members—including a returning Silver Surfer—would come and go, with Dr. Strange operating as a de facto leader, while the team used his sanctum sanctorum as their rendezvous point. Issue #4 introduced the first new "regular" team member, Valkyrie, previously seen in *The Avengers* (as a disguise for a Thor villain, Amora the Enchantress) and *The Incredible Hulk* (in which the Enchantress used an unwitting host body for Valkyrie's persona). The current incarnation's host body was Barbara Norriss, a catatonic ex-cult member. As Valkyrie's warlike and stridently feminist persona asserted itself, the quest for her true identity became one of the comic's central themes.

The Defenders fought a variety of Marvel's stock of villains, including Magneto, the Red Ghost, and Attuma, and they were also part of the first extended inter-title crossover, in the so-called "Avengers/Defenders war," which ran across eight issues altogether. Soon afterward, the group was joined by a defecting member of the Squadron Sinister, Nighthawk, a.k.a. wealthy heir Kyle Richmond, who had drifted into a life of crime to relieve his boredom but who would soon become one of Marvel's most complex heroes.

With issue #20 (1975) and the arrival of eccentric genius Steve Gerber as writer, the comic entered its most memorable era. Gerber pitted the team, now reduced to a nucleus of Hulk, Dr. Strange, Valkyrie, and Nighthawk, against a bizarre group of deviant scientists known as the Headmen. One of these had his head transplanted onto the body of a gorilla, while another's head was a large, ruby-red sphere. Gerber also explored Valkyrie's schizophrenic existence, as her host body's husband, Jack Norriss, suddenly appeared looking for his wife. Nighthawk, too, was developed as a character when first his girlfriend lost an arm in an explosion, and then his own brain was removed by the Headmen. Indeed, identity (and brains) proved to be a recurring theme of Gerber's tenure, as the brain of Headmen member Chondu was transplanted first into an unsuspecting deer and then into a monstrous harpie's body, while Valkyrie's erstwhile husband Jack ended up in Nighthawk's now vacant body. Add to the mix a new (female) Russian superhero, the Red Guardian, a celestial mind-control cult called the Bozos, a caged-heat-style spell behind bars for Valkyrie, and a murderous elf with a gun, and it's no wonder that fans were by turns amazed, amused, and bemused. Gerber left the comic after issue #41; his successor David Anthony Kraft sustained something of its strangeness, but by the turn of the decade it was just another superhero title.


GIANT-SIZE DEFENDERS
1
JULY
50¢
68 BIG PAGES
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
GIANT-SIZE
DEFENDERS
FABULOUS FIRST EDITION!
BONUS: THE SILVER SURFER STRIKES AGAIN!
EXTRA! STARTLING, SENSES-SHATTERING
SECRETS
OF DR. STRANGE, SUB-MARINER, AND THE INCREDIBLE HULK!

Giant-Size Defenders #1 © 1974 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Gil Kane and Frank Giacoia.)

The final twist in the team's existence came in late 1982, when most of the group were jettisoned to make way for X-Men alumni the Angel, Iceman, and the Beast, in a failed attempt to cash-in on the X-Men's soaring popularity. The fans failed to take the revamp to heart and Marvel—deciding to stick their lucrative stars into a comic with an "X" in its title—canceled *The Defenders* and created *X-Factor* in its place, leaving Valkyrie, Gargoyle et al. in limbo.

Since that time, two subsequent revivals have emerged, the first of which (in 1993) went back to the comic's original premise of the "non-team" by using "The Defenders" as a catchall title to showcase eclectic or underused superheroes. *The Secret Defenders* was based on Dr. Strange summoning the likes of Wolverine, Spider-Man, and the Silver Surfer to combat various mystical enemies, and ran for two years. The 2000 revival, with longtime fan Erik Larsen providing art and also co-scripting with popular writer Kurt Busiek, returned to the classic lineup of the team's early years and was predicated on frantic action and old-style battles. Neither revival matched the popularity or quality of the Defenders' glory years. —*DAR*

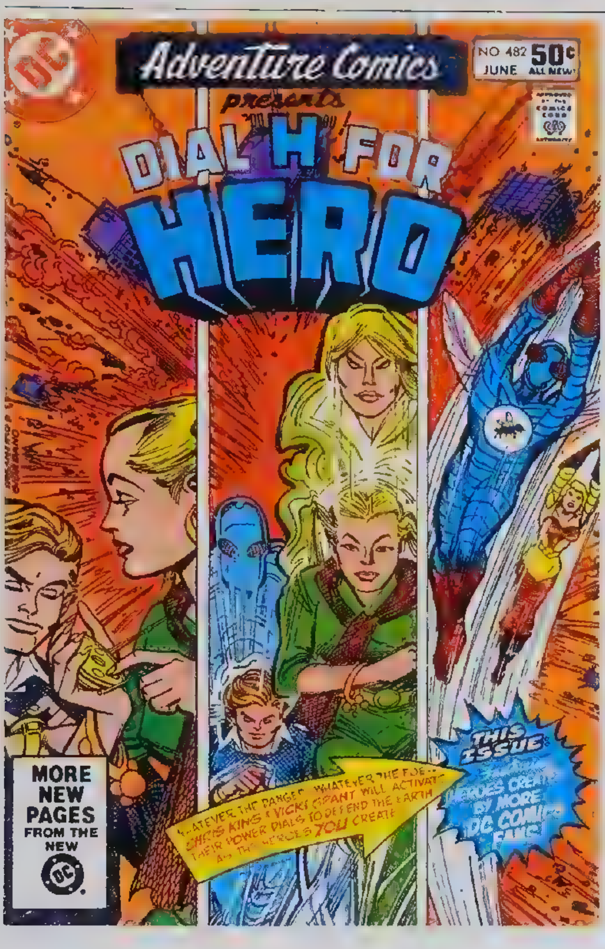
"Dial 'H' for Hero"

From its inception in January 1966, "Dial 'H' for Hero" has been one of DC Comics' quirkiest features. In fact, it was comics' first interactive strip. Readers were first introduced to young Robby Reed in *House of Mystery* #156, in a story written by Dave Wood and illustrated by Jim Mooney. Soon after moving to Littleville, bespectacled science prodigy Reed discovers a strange-looking telephone dial while exploring an underground cavern. After decoding a strange inscription on the dial, he finds that it was created by aliens and that by dialing the letters H-E-R-O he is transformed into a superhero. In fact, as the strip's subtitle, "the boy who could change into a thousand superheroes," made clear, Reed became a different hero each time he touched the dial.

Like many of DC's mid-1960s features, "Dial 'H' for Hero" was lighthearted, breezy, and attractively drawn, but what set it apart from its competitors were the various superhero guises dreamed up by DC's writers. These were as wonderfully diverse and bizarre a sequence of characters as the comics world has ever seen. Among other peculiar creations, fans were entertained by the likes of Daffy the Great, the Squid, King Kandy, Baron Buzz-Saw, Robby Robot, Balloon Boy, the Human Icicle, Mighty Moppet (a giant baby), and Plastic Man (who was actually the old Quality Comics hero making his DC debut). After seventeen issues, *House of Mystery* dumped the strip and was converted into a horror anthology. Nothing further was heard of Reed until he filled a guest slot in Plastic Man's mid-1970s revival. This appearance starred an embittered, misanthropic Reed reduced to eking out a living as a writer, but by the end of the issue he seemed to be all right again.

In March 1981 a new "Dial 'H' for Hero" strip surfaced in *Adventure Comics* #479, shortly after being previewed in revised form in *Legion of Super Heroes* #272. Uniquely for a superhero comic, it encouraged readers (including noted science fiction author Harlan Ellison) to contribute ideas for the various characters. This strip starred Christopher "Chris" King and Victoria "Vicki" Grant, high-school students from Fairfax, Virginia, who discovered an old chest in King's attic; in the chest were a watch and a pendant, both bearing dials. It seemed that Reed had at some point dialed D I V-I D E on his original dial, thus splitting it in two. The process also split Reed into two characters: the Wizard (who was good) and the evil Master, who plagued the two teenagers until he was reunited with his good counterpart. While never quite as silly as their 1960s predecessor, King and Grant nevertheless had several enjoyably ridiculous incarnations, such as Mister Thin, Thumbelina, Hasty Pudding, Frosty, and Ragnarok the Cosmic Viking.

After *Adventure Comics* became a reprint title in 1982, King moved over to the pages of *The New Adventures of Superboy*, but Grant apparently lost interest in being a hero—though she later improbably joined a cult called the Children of the Sun, while her dial was picked up by Hero Cruz. In a series of tales throughout the 1990s in *Teen Ti-*


Adventure Comics
presents
DIAL H FOR HERO
NO 482
JUNE
50¢
ALL NEW!
MORE NEW PAGES FROM THE NEW DC
THIS ISSUE features HEROES CREATED BY MORE DC COMICS FANS!

Adventure Comics #482 © 1981 DC Comics. (Cover art by Carmine Infantino, Dennis Jensen, and Don Heck.)

tans and *Superboy & the Ravers,* Cruz tackled the brainwashed Grant (who had somehow internalized her dial's powers) before she eventually came to her senses. At some point her dial must have been donated to a museum, where it was discovered in the twenty-fifth century by one Lori Morning, who then took it with her to the thirtieth century (are you following this?) where she joined the Legion of Superheroes. In the fine tradition of the strip, her many heroic incarnations included Star-Spangled Lass, Chiller, Blip, and Blobetta.

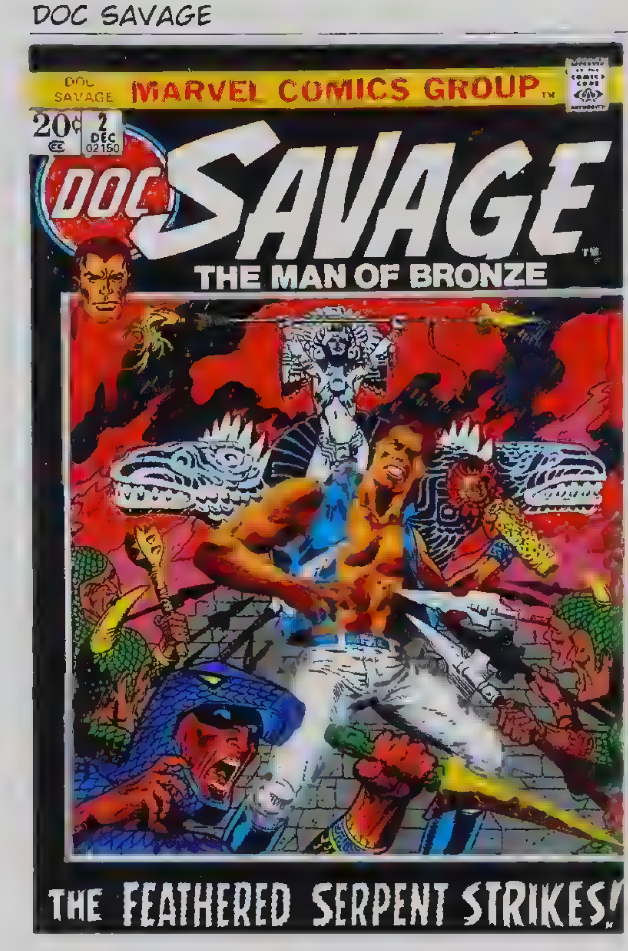
After a somewhat fallow period, DC once more revived the concept in 2003, for the first time in its own title—now shortened to *H-E-R-O.* The next recipient of a magical dial was Jerry Feldon, who found it in Scoopers' ice cream shop, where it had been left behind by a mysterious female customer. After a few issues, Jerry passed on the dial to family man Matt Allen, who passed it on to others, and it appears as if this latest series will be the most unpredictable to date. —*DAR*

Doc Savage

With his rippling muscles, extraordinary strength, and genius-level IQ, he could outrun a horse, dodge a speeding bullet, speak in a myriad of foreign languages, and perform life-saving surgery, and then, after saving the world yet again, he would retire to his secluded Arctic hideout, the Fortress of Solitude. No, this is not a description of Superman but is, in fact, Doc Savage, a hero who predated the Man of Steel by five years, and who laid the foundation for the superhero explosion that occurred in 1938 with Superman's arrival. In the wake of their successful *Shadow* pulp magazine, Street & Smith publisher Henry Ralston and editor John Nomaric dreamed up their ideal hero, a cross between Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes, as a sort of counterpoint to the darker, sinister Shadow. They handed over the concept to pulp veteran Lester Dent (writing under the pseudonym Kenneth Robeson) and the first issue of *Doc Savage* magazine hit the stands in March 1933. Sales soon rose to 200,000 per issue—the title was a hit.

Clark Savage Junior had been raised as the perfect man, a master of all things intellectual and physical, and he was given the nickname "Doc" because of his skills as a surgeon. At a wake to mourn his late father, Doc gathers together five friends—all masters in their respective fields—who swear to maintain his father's ideals of travel, adventure, and punishing evil. The group consists of the dapper Harvard lawyer "Ham" Brooks, the strong engineer Renny, the bespectacled and verbose archaeologist Johnny, the electrical expert Long Tom, and Monk, a cantankerous, ape-like chemical genius whose constant baiting of Ham was one of the feature's recurring themes. Operating out of the eighty-sixth floor of a certain New York skyscraper (that closely resembles the Empire State Building), the happy band trek around the globe, from exotic location to hidden tribe to evil genius and back again.

Not content with his imposing physique, bronzed skin, fabulous wealth, and secret hideout, Doc Savage, a.k.a. the Man of Bronze, was a master inventor, and his stories were chock-full of his super-inventions, including a pocket knife that



Doc Savage #3 © 1972 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jim Steranko.)

fired sleep-inducing "mercy" bullets from its handle (since Doc did not believe in killing his enemies), a belt with its own grappling hook, miniature bombs, false fingertips fitted with needles that caused unconsciousness, an Atomic disintegrator, oxygen pills, exploding buttons, and clothes that either held, or doubled as, weapons. Add to this an array of super-gadgetized vehicles—including his Helldiver, capable of sailing under polar ice—and one can easily see that Doc was indeed a hero to be reckoned with. In the course of their adventures, he and his band encountered all manner of weird and colorful adversaries, including the Black Witch, the Annihilist, the Stone Man, the Vanisher, and the Czar of Fear.

Lester Dent's prose was punchy, breathless, and fast moving; it grabbed the reader and did not let go for a moment. With a contract binding him to an output of 70,000 words a month, Dent himself had to be something of a superman! In fact, he not only managed that workload, writing almost every story for 181 issues, but also found time to contribute to other titles to boot. Physically, Dent was an impressive figure—tall, strong, a member of the Adventurers' Club—as well as being a diver, a magician, and a sailor with his own yacht, and so it is not hard to see Doc Savage as an extension of Dent's own personality.

Street & Smith was quick to exploit Doc's popularity with a fan club, portrait, lapel pin, and his own short-lived radio show in 1934. However, when Superman and his hundreds of followers appeared on the newsstands, sales of pulps were gradually hurt across the board, since they largely shared with the new comics the same young readership. Street & Smith itself entered the emerging comic-book market in 1940, only a few months after Marvel and Fawcett, with *Shadow Comics,* which also featured a strip version of Doc Savage, drawn by Maurice Gutwirth. This backup strip lasted five issues, but even before it ended, Doc had emerged in his own comic (in May 1940). Early episodes closely followed the pulp stories, but with issue #5 of *Doc Savage Comics* (August 1941), the Jack Binder studio reinvented the pulp magazine hero into a superhero: Doc acquired a Tibetan sacred hood, armed with a "miracle-working ruby" that could deflect bullets and hypnotize his foes. This bare-chested, hood-wearing superhero (for such he now undoubtedly was) was known as Doc Savage–the Invincible (often simply referred to by his new name, the Invincible); unfortunately, in sales terms he was certainly not the latter, as the comic folded after a mere twenty issues, in 1943. Nevertheless, the superhero makeover of the character continued on in a 1943 radio show.

Returning to the back pages of *Shadow Comics,* Doc's comics adventures continued until that title's demise in 1949, though in those strips he was once more just plain Doc. Doc's comic strips were written by Otto Binder, among others, and were drawn initially by his brother John's studio, though later by Al Bare and Bob Powell. Just as *Shadow Comics* was canceled in 1949, so too was its pulp equivalent, and Doc's pulp magazine as well. The comparison between the demise of the pulp heroes and comics' own superheroes, most of whom had been canceled by the end of the decade, is a fascinating one. Clearly, both were fulfilling the same need for heroes, first during the Great Depression and then later during World War II—a need that apparently no longer existed in a postwar era. When superheroes experienced their extraordinary rebirth in the 1960s, so too would Doc Savage rise again.

In 1964, Bantam repackaged the first of Lester Dent's Doc Savage stories in paperback. More books followed, and in time the new paperback series became a publishing phenomenon, eventually reprinting all 181 original stories and adding new ones by Philip José Farmer and fan/historian/comic writer Will Murray. With sales running into the tens of millions, it is no surprise that comic book companies soon took notice, and a Gold Key one-shot comic duly appeared in 1966. Marvel was next in line for the license, releasing two well-crafted series: first a color adaptation of various Dent stories (eight issues, 1972–1974) and then an all new black-and-white magazine by Doug Moench, John Buscema, and Tony Dezuniga (eight issues, 1975–1977), which has come closest to capturing the spirit of the pulps. A couple of fanciful crossovers also saw Doc and his chums guest-star with Spider-Man (*Giant-Size Spider-Man* #3, 1974) and the Thing (*Marvel Two-in-One* #21, 1976).

The increased interest in Doc Savage as a hero also came to the attention of George Pal, who produced a 1975 movie starring Ron Ely. Critics found the film to be cinematically appealing and Ely the perfect Doc; however, many mentioned its weak script, the tone of which veered dangerously close to camp. Longtime fan and artist Jim Steranko also weighed in with a new fan club, the Doc Savage Brotherhood of Bronze. By the end of the decade, only the paperbacks were left, but in recent years a succession of comics publishers—DC, Millennium, Innovation, and Dark Horse—have released their own versions of the great man. Most of these have been relatively true to the character's pulp roots. DC's 1988 series brought him forward to the present and also featured a crossover with the Shadow. In 1995, Dark Horse Comics released *The Shadow and Doc Savage* miniseries. Starting in 2010, DC Comics published a new Doc Savage comics series, but it proved to be short-lived. However, it is undoubtedly true that Doc Savage's legacy lives on to some degree in each and every superhero comic published today. —*DAR*

Doctor Fate

Like his fellow supernatural hero, the Spectre, Doctor Fate was born and canceled during World War II, but endless revivals have kept the character in the public eye for decades. Doctor Fate first appeared in May 1940 in *More Fun Comics* #55, under the hands of journeymen creators Gardner Fox and Howard Sherman, and was DC Comics' eleventh superhero (although by this point magicians of various descriptions were already a staple of comic books). With his blue-and-yellow bodysuit and his identity-concealing golden helmet, he was one of the more striking heroes of the time—albeit a rather impersonal one, as his face was permanently covered. Doctor Fate was Kent Nelson who, at the age of twelve, had stumbled across some ancient Sumerian ruins while exploring with his archaeologist father. An escaping gas killed the father, but the son awakened an ancient energy being called Nabu, who infused him with power, causing him to grow to instant adulthood, and equipping him with mystical artifacts: a helmet, an amulet, and a cape.

Back home in the United States, Nelson's power was almost limitless, which made his initial adventures somewhat predictable; after all, there can be little suspenseful drama if you know that your hero will always be victorious. This deficiency was partly addressed halfway into the character's career when his helmet was shortened, apparently limiting his powers to a degree, but coming up with suitably powerful villains was always a problem for his writers. In his civilian identity, Nelson operated out of an eerie-looking brick tower in Salem, Massachusetts, and courted the society beauty Inza Cramer. In an unusual twist, Nelson soon revealed his secret identity to Cramer and later married her. Like most of DC's main heroes of the period, Doctor Fate was inducted into the Justice Society and starred in their first eighteen adventures, but after the cancellation of his own strip in 1944, he was soon removed from the Society, too.

Despite Doctor Fate's early years being generally unexceptional, when the Justice Society was revived in the 1960s, the character became an integral part of the group and took part in almost all of their regular Justice League crossovers until the mid-1980s. When *All Star Comics* was brought back in the 1970s, Doctor Fate was in action again and he featured in most succeeding Justice Society outings. In the years since the war, comics had increasingly embraced powerful mystical heroes, and Doctor Fate's cosmic abilities were more and more in keeping with what the fans had come to expect. A 1976 one-shot, drawn by Walter Simonson, was particularly well received (and has been reprinted periodically ever since) but readers had to wait another twelve years before Doctor Fate was given his own title, and by then the helmet already had a different occupant.

This new Doctor Fate was, in fact, two people: ten-year-old Eric Strauss and his stepmother Linda, who merged to become one person; Kent Nelson was reduced to being their mentor. After a couple of years, the mantle of Fate was passed on to Nelson's wife Cramer, as the writers began to develop the idea that the spirit of Nabu, which was what had given Doctor Fate his (or her or their!) power, resided in the helmet and other artifacts—so almost anyone could take over the role. Cramer's Doctor Fate seemed as interested in urban renewal and ecological matters as fighting demons or sorcerers, so there was no place for her in the "nasty nineties," and she was replaced by the character's fourth incarnation.

Jared Stevens was a treasure hunter who found Doctor Fate's helmet, and was thereby summoned back to the tower in Salem. When the tower was destroyed in a mysterious explosion, the various artifacts became merged with Stevens, while Nelson and Cramer disappeared in a puff of smoke. Stevens became, simply, Fate. That the old helmet was now transformed into a dagger was symptomatic of Stevens' unlikeable personality, and few mourned when his incarnation of the character was short-lived. After three years in the wilderness, Fate reappeared in the first issue of a 1999 *Justice Society* revival, only to be killed off immediately; in a telling editorial comment, he was dispatched with his own knife. However, the comic's next few issues were devoted to the search for a new host for the spirit of Nabu, and in a mind-bogglingly complex plot twist Hector Hall (formerly the Silver Scarab from Infinity Inc.), son of the first Hawkman, was summoned from a dream realm, reincarnated as a newborn baby, suddenly transformed into a fully grown adult, and inaugurated as Doctor Fate the fifth!

Eventually Dr. Kent V. Nelson, the grand-nephew of the first Kent Nelson, obtained the Helmet of Nabu and became the current Doctor Fate. This new version of Doctor Fate was co-created by legendary writer Steve Gerber in *Countdown to Mystery* #1 (November 2007). This series was Gerber's last work in comics; he died while working on it.

Doctor Fate appears in animation in *Superman: The Animated Series, Justice League, Justice League Unlimited,* and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* Doctor Fate also appears in live action, played by actor Brent Stait, in a 2010 episode of *Smallville.* —*DAR & PS*

Doctor Strange

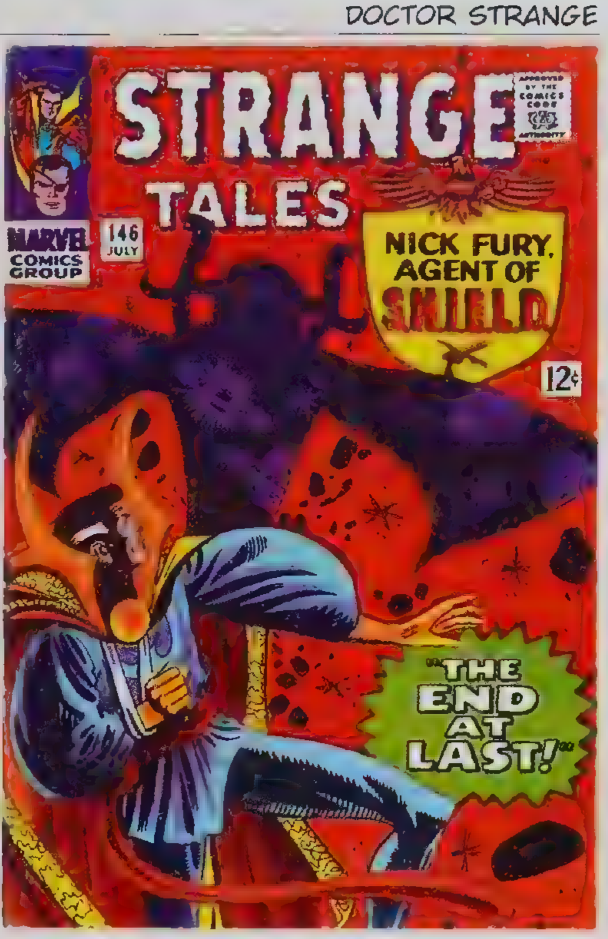
What started as a small backup strip, in a 1963 issue of *Strange Tales* #110, soon blossomed into one of the cult characters of the decade—one who has been a cornerstone of the Marvel Comics universe ever since. Magicians had been a staple of comics ever since Mandrake in the comic strips of the 1930s and Zatara in *Action Comics* #1, but Doctor Strange potently mixed his sorcery with the energy of superheroes to create something unique. His origin story, however, could have come out of the pulps: Vain, egotistical neurosurgeon Stephen Strange injures his hands in a car crash and winds up on skid row with the other outcasts. In a last-ditch search for salvation, he travels to Tibet to find the fabled "Ancient One," who he hopes will heal his hands. On finding the old sage, he becomes his acolyte and (as each cover proudly proclaimed) "Master of the Mystic Arts!"

Under writer Stan Lee and artist Steve Ditko, Doctor Strange was a strip unlike any other, as the hero traveled to other dimensions and fought unique villains like Nightmare, Eternity, and the dread Dormammu. References to such wonders as the Eye of Agamotto and the Great Book of the Vishanti hinted at almost unimaginable wonders. Lee kept the stories punchy, exciting, and enjoyably florid, while Ditko summoned up inventive images and unique visions that still look innovative today.

Doctor Strange, his acolyte and girlfriend Clea, and faithful servant Wong operated out of their Gothic "sanctum sanctorum" in the heart of New York City's Greenwich Village, soon to be the epicenter of the city's emerging counterculture. By the time of 1967's "Summer of Love," the Doctor Strange strip had been widely adopted by the hippy movement, and its spells and alternate realities were widely believed to resemble LSD trips. Strange appeared on Filmore Ballroom concert posters and even on the covers of Pink Floyd albums. He was, in effect, the psychedelic superhero—except, of course, his creators were middle-aged professionals with years of comics work behind them, and Ditko in particular was known for his conservative views and distrust of hippies.

In 1968, despite Ditko's departure, Doctor Strange was given his own title. His new artist, Gene Colan, produced hallucinatory layouts that were even more experimental than his predecessor's. There was a brief, last-ditch attempt to make Strange more superhero-like by giving him a mask, but it would appear that the character was becoming too far-out for a mass audience. Rather than have a useful character languish in obscurity, Strange was eventually teamed with those other Marvel nonconformists, the Hulk and the Sub-Mariner, as the Defenders. Throughout the 1970s, and intermittently ever since, the Defenders have been a newsstand staple, and with Doctor Strange taking a leading role, interest in the sorcerer was rekindled.

Initially in *Marvel Premiere* and then (from 1974 onward) once again in his own comic, Doctor Strange was used by new writer Steve Englehart as a vehicle to explore the interest in spirituality, self-exploration, and consciousness-raising which was then in vogue. Among all manner of cosmic, surreal adventures, the most extraordinary storyline culminated in Earth's destruction and, one second later, recreation, leaving the almost omnipotent Strange as the planet's only "original" inhabitant. Engelhart left after a couple of years, but the comic continued to be one of the more literate titles in Marvel's lineup for the rest of the decade. Evidently, as readers had grown up with their comics, the more introspective and thoughtful Doctor Strange stories resonated with their maturity. Presumably among those more mature readers were the television executives who commissioned a well-received made-for-TV movie in 1978, aptly titled *Doctor Strange*. Starring Peter Hooten, John Mills, and Jessica Walter, and written and directed by Phillip DeGuere, the movie was very true to the spirit of the comic, despite changing Doctor Strange's costume (indeed Frank Brunner, one of the main artists in the comic's revamp, contributed design work to the project). In 1979, Pocket Books published William Rotsler's Doctor Strange novel, *Nightmare*.


STRANGE TALES
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
146 JULY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD
12¢
"THE END AT LAST!"

Strange Tales #146 © 1966 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Steve Ditko.)

In the more materialistic 1980s, on the other hand, there was apparently no place for subtlety or introspection, and so Strange spent much of that decade in cancellation. A revival in 1988 was characterized by an almost constant procession of changes, including Strange being stripped of most of his powers, losing one eye, and abandoning magic only to return to it three issues later. Many 1990s issues were peopled with monsters and vampires, and the comic became affiliated with Marvel's hard-hitting "Midnight Sons" storyline. Later innovations failed to prevent the comic's cancellation. Doctor Strange has kept appearing, if sporadically, ever since—in a miniseries for Marvel's mature-readers Marvel Knights line; as a benign spirit in the grim future fable *Earth X;* as a cold manipulator in the otherwise upbeat alternate-future MC-2 line; in a short-lived, tongue-in-cheek *Defenders* revival; as an aide to the Thunder God in the macabrely humorous *Thor: Viking*s miniseries; and elsewhere—which shows Marvel's fondness, if not always the market's enthusiasm, for this unusual character.

In *New Avengers* #7 (July 2005) Doctor Strange was revealed to be a member of the Illuminati, a small, secret group of heroes who cope with threats to Earth; other members include Black Bolt, the Black Panther, Iron Man, Mr. Fantastic, Professor X, and Sub-Mariner, and recent additions Captain America and Medusa. Doctor Strange also became a member of the New Avengers. Doctor Strange stars in the direct-to-video animated film *Doctor Strange: The Sorcerer Supreme* (2007). *—DAR & PS*

Doom Patrol

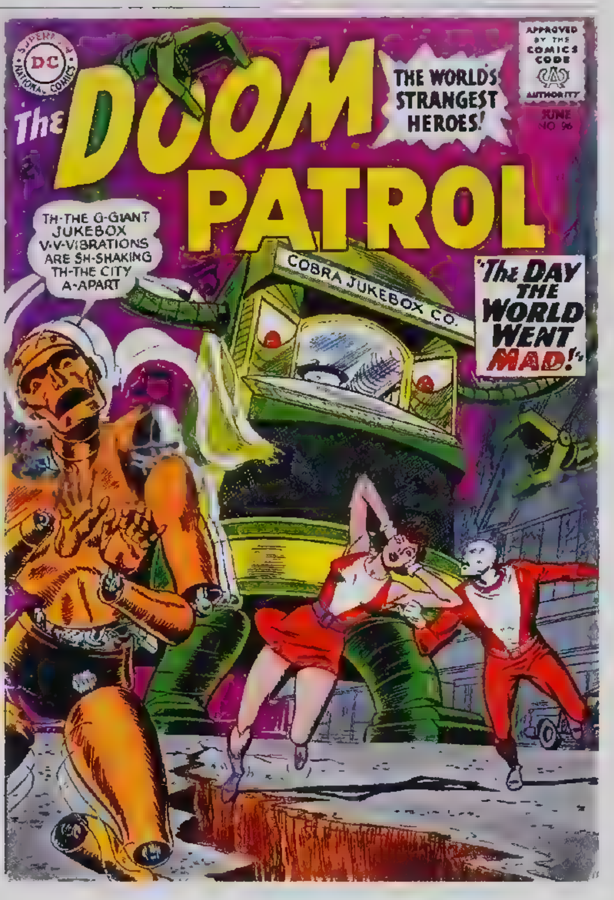
It's asking a lot of a comic to star "the world's strangest heroes," but the Doom Patrol has delivered on that promise not once but twice. The veteran creative duo of writer Arnold Drake and artist Bruno Premiani introduced the team in the pages of DC Comics' *My Greatest Adventure* #80 (in mid-1963). Their first story relates how the wheelchair-bound genius Niles Caulder (also called "the Chief") summons "three victims of a cruel and fantastic fate" to his brownstone to offer them the chance of adventure—and superhero status. The three are: actress Rita Farr, who, after being affected by volcanic gas, is able to assume a large or small size (Elasti-Girl); Larry Trainor, a test pilot who was doused in cosmic rays, gaining an "energy double" made of negative energy—though this can only survive outside his body for sixty seconds (Negative Man); and Cliff Steele, a daredevil racecar driver, whose brain is transplanted by the Chief into a robot body following a cataclysmic crash (Robotman—no relation to the Golden Age [1938–1954] character of the same name).

Drake conceived the team as a response to such emerging Marvel Comics superheroes as the Fantastic Four, which emphasized characterization over the convoluted plots that were then DC's stock-in-trade. In fact, the Marvel superhero team and comic that the Doom Patrol most closely resembled was the X-Men, which shared its lineup of bitter outsiders under a wheelchair-confined leader, a secret hi-tech hideout, and arch-villains with similar names (the Brotherhood of Evil for Doom Patrol, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants for the X-Men). Indeed, to compound the similarities, Drake would later move to Marvel to write—you guessed it—the X-Men comic. Significantly, however, it was the Doom Patrol that came first (by three months), though, while both strips developed a committed readership, it was the X-Men which proved the more enduring of the two.

Back in 1963, however, the Doom Patrol comic soon proved popular, and with its 86th issue, *My Greatest Adventure* was retitled *The Doom Patrol* and ran under that name until issue #121 five years later. The strip had an air of sophistication about it, thanks to Drake's well-rounded characterizations and Premiani's accomplished, European-flavored draftsmanship, which set it apart from its rivals. The lineup was augmented by bizarre figures such as Mento, the wealthy Steve Dayton, who built himself his own (ludicrous-looking) mind-reading hairnet, and the green-skinned Beast Boy, who could change into any animal (and who later joined the Teen Titans). Villains, too, were included in abundance, such as the immortal (and very wrinkly) General Immortus, Videx (a giant with see-through skin), an enormous walking jukebox, and assorted other monsters and mutants. The aforementioned Brotherhood of Evil was a motley crew consisting of the Brain (who was just that—a brain), the shape-changing Madame Rouge, and Monsieur Mallah, who was a sentient gorilla.

In time, Mento and Elasti-Girl married, and then adopted Beast Boy, while Madame Rouge fell in love with the Chief—but the comic was perhaps too strange for some readers and cancellation became inevitable. The last issue ended with the group sacrificing themselves to save a village, and they stayed dead for a decade, but when DC's *Showcase* comic was revived in 1977, so too was the Doom Patrol. It seemed that Robotman had somehow survived the explosion that killed his teammates, and he joined up with a new group of young outsiders: Tempest, Negative Woman (no relation), and Celsius, who turned out to have been married to the Chief (not that anyone knew). This new team starred in a mere three issues of *Showcase*, and then had to wait another ten years before being heard from again, when a new Doom Patrol comic premiered in 1987.

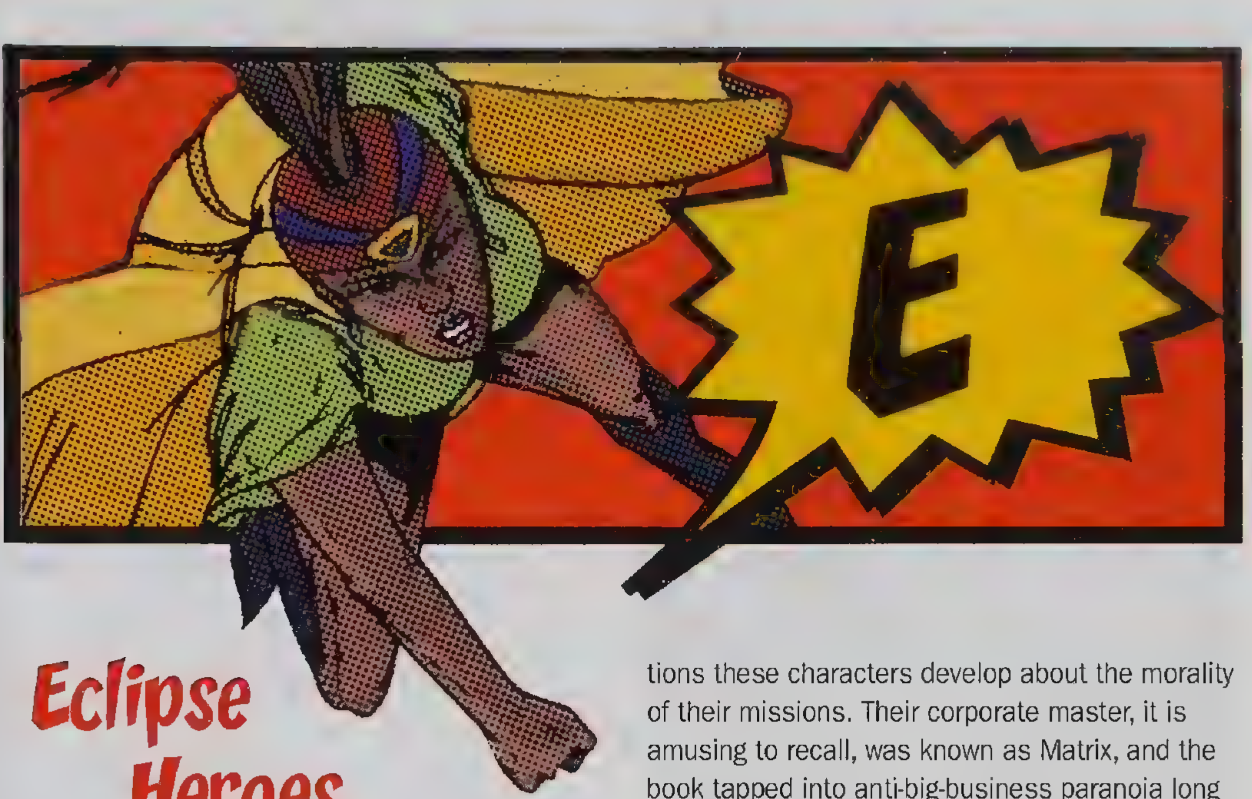
This second run reintroduced the original Negative Man, Larry Trainor, and in due course the Chief reappeared, so that only the unfortunate Elasti-Girl seems to have perished back in the 1960s. A couple of years into their new comic, the Doom Patrol acquired a young British writer, Grant Morrison, and became stranger than ever, picking up a more mature, cult audience in the process. Morrison introduced Crazy Jane, a schizophrenic with sixty-four different personalities, while Trainor fused with his energy being and an unfortunate nurse to become the radioactive Rebis. The cast of villains now included the Brotherhood of Dada, the Beard Hunter, and Danny the Street, who was—yes!—a sentient street. For almost four years, Morrison dreamed up some of the strangest and most imaginative comics ever seen, which managed the seemingly impossible task of combining traditional superheroes with surreal plots and serious topics (such as child abuse). After Morrison's departure, the comic carried on in much the same vein but without his spark of inspiration, and it was canceled with its eighty-seventh issue—which was nevertheless an impressive run for such a left-field title.


SUPERB NATIONAL COMICS
DC
The DOOM PATROL
THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JUNE NO. 96
TH-THE G-GIANT JUKEBOX V-V-VIBRATIONS ARE SH-SHAKING TH-THE CITY A-APART
COBRA JUKEBOX CO.
'The DAY THE WORLD WENT MAD!'

Doom Patrol #96 © 1965 DC Comics. (Cover art by Bob Brown.)

John Arcudi wrote the next *Doom Patrol* series, which began in 2001 and ran into 2003. In 2004 John Byrne wrote and drew a new *Doom Patrol* comics series, starring the original team members, with Elasti-Girl and Negative Man alive once again; this series lasted for 18 issues. The Doom Patrol returned in yet another new series in 2009, written by Keith Giffen. In it Rita Farr adopts the new name Elasti-Woman (probably to avoid confusion with Elasti-Girl of Pixar's *The Incredibles*).

The original Doom Patrol, except for the Chief, appear in the two-part "Homecoming" episode in the animated series *Teen Titans*. "The Last Patrol," a 2010 episode of the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, is an adaptation of the classic final issue of the original *Doom Patrol* comics series, in which the original Doom Patrol sacrifice their lives. *DAR & PS*



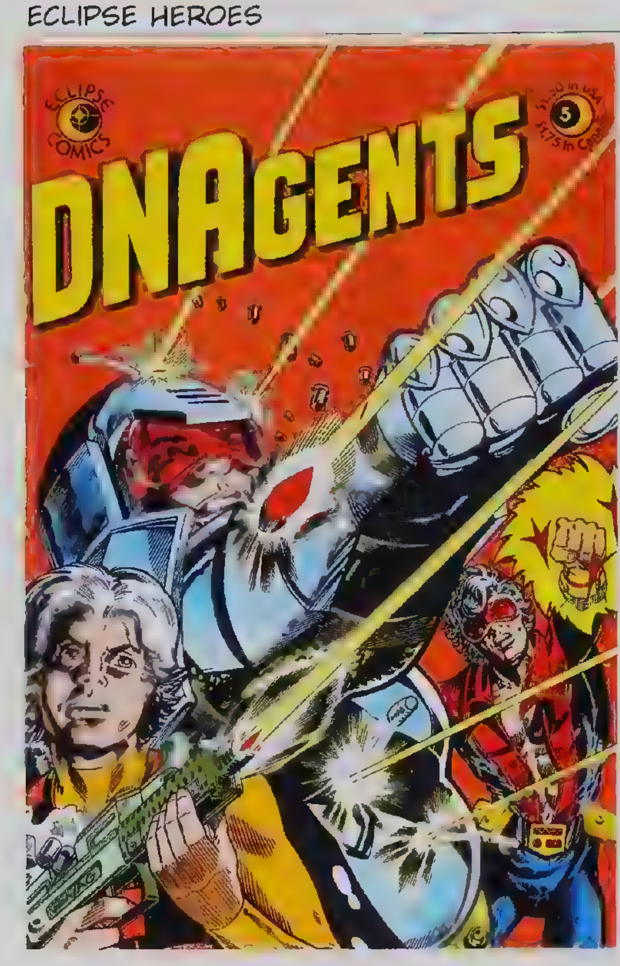
Eclipse Heroes

Eclipse was one of the first truly independent comics companies, beginning in 1977 and serving as a haven for many of the medium's most thoughtful and edgy talents (like writers Don McGregor and Steve Gerber) when they'd been driven from the majors, while also offering a welcoming creative space for those who remained in the mainstream but sought more substantive outlets (like artists Marshall Rogers and Gene Colan). The company came into being with McGregor's dystopian action saga *Sabre*, and continued for seventeen years with a diverse roster of everything from sci-fi, horror, and manga to satire, postmodern funny animals, and opera adaptations. In the mix, it didn't shy away from the occasional quality superhero series.

In this area, Eclipse is probably best remembered as the stateside home of Alan Moore's gloomy masterwork *Miracleman*. But there are other fan favorites as well, perhaps chief among them Mark Evanier and Will Meugniot's long-running *DNAgents*. Debuting in 1983, when genetic engineering seemed more than a century away, the book concerns a troupe of specially-powered meta-humans created by a global corporation to do its often questionable bidding—and the questions these characters develop about the morality of their missions. Their corporate master, it is amusing to recall, was known as Matrix, and the book tapped into anti-big-business paranoia long before this theme became a staple of pop culture.

The series dealt with uneasy relationships between genetic "cultures" in the way Marvel's X-Men books are known to—as an allegory for real-life friction between nations and races. Stories would revolve around unusual ethical themes, like the one in which a hostile potentate (the Commander) forces the armor-clad DNAgent Tank into a televised battle with a mighty assassin to prove the mutant race's inferiority—but the assassin's mercilessness increases public sympathy for the DNAgents instead. The book also took a novel approach to ubiquitous comics conventions of the day, as when *DNAgents* and DC's *Teen Titans* held a "secret crossover," in which the two actual teams never met, but a parallel narrative played out in each series concurrently, with the Agents thinly veiled and cleverly renamed "the Re-Combatants" in the Titan's book and the Titans dubbed Project Youngblood in the Agents' story.

The series ran for some four years and spawned several successful spinoffs, including a miniseries for the team's electricity-generating hothead Surge, and a two-year run for the non-genetically-modified hero Crossfire (also written by Evanier, with artist Dan Spiegle). Crossfire was a Hollywood bail-bondsman by day and costumed



DNAgents #5 © 1983 Mark Evanier and Will Meugniot. (Cover art by Will Meugniot and Al Gordon.)

vigilante by night, who seemingly found endless material in Evanier's real-life discontents as a television scriptwriter.

In addition to the veteran creators of these series, Eclipse was known for giving promising new talents their first opportunities, and one such arrangement resulted in a series little noticed at the time but sought after by fans since: *The Liberty Project,* a book built around the novel concept of incarcerated supervillains given a shot at redemption through a kind of work-release as government-controlled superheroes. The series was drawn by James W. Fry and written by Kurt Busiek, a writer then known to few, but later acclaimed throughout the industry for comics like the groundbreaking *Marvels* and *Astro City.* (In 2003 *The Liberty Project* was put back in print in a collected volume from About Comics.)

Other Eclipse superheroes included the patriotic WWII champion Sgt. Strike and his modern counterpart Strike!, a black teenager who finds the high-tech harness that gave the Sgt. his superpowers. (These characters' mythos tied into that of Airboy, Skywolf, and other headliners from an unusual 1940s genre of aviator heroes once published by Hillman and revived by Eclipse.) The eclectic stable included such others as the spacefaring superteam the New Wave, and one of Spider-Man co-creator Steve Ditko's strange metaphysical heroes, Static (no relation to the later Milestone Comics star). Big names from the nomadic landscape of creator-owned properties, including Dave Stevens' Rocketeer, also passed through the company's pages.

Eclipse was committed to quality production values, creative freedom, and full ownership of its books by each one's artists and writers. In this, it set a standard for integrity that not many of the get-rich-quick independents that followed it into comics' mid-1980s to early 1990s boom bothered to match. Eclipse had helped bring about that boom by pioneering the practice of distributing comics directly and exclusively to specialty comic shops with a ready audience. But when that audience fell sharply after a craze driven by speculating collectors lost its steam, many comic shops shut their doors and Eclipse fell victim to the same system it had helped nurture, going out of business in 1994. It's sad that Eclipse eventually lived up to its name, but any company would be proud to live up to its legacy.

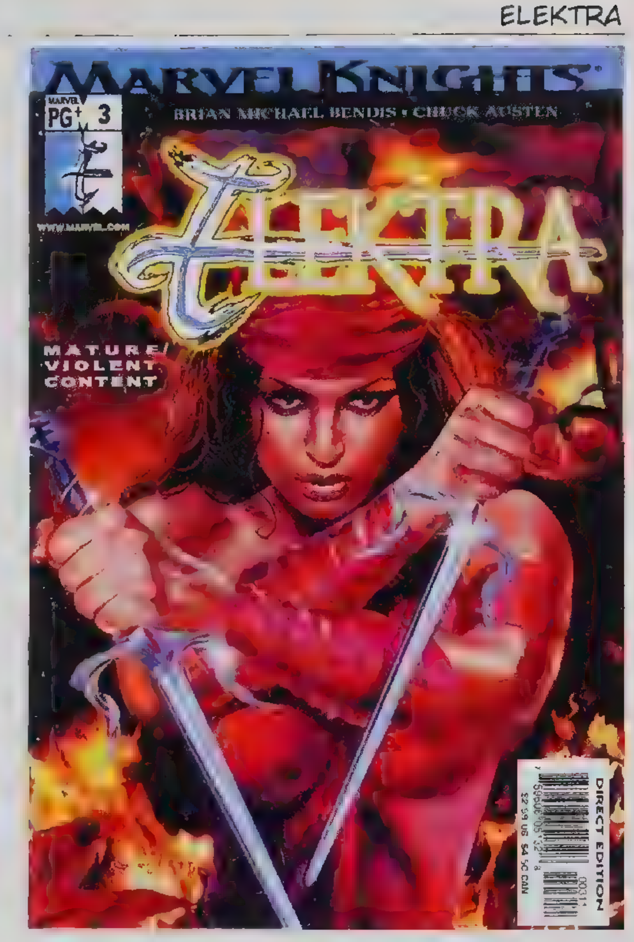
Other superhero series originally published by Eclipse include *I Am Coyote,* which was created by the classic team of writer Steve Englehart and artist Marshall Rogers, and debuted in *Eclipse Magazine* #2 (July 1981). Its title character was a superhuman based on the trickster coyote of Native American mythology. Writer/artist B.C. Boyer's *The Masked Man,* whose title character is a private eye who dons a mask to combat crime, much like the Spirit, debuted in *Eclipse Magazine* #7 (November 1982). The title character of *Destroyer Duck* #1, which Eclipse published in 1982, was created by writer Steve Gerber and legendary artist Jack Kirby to help raise money for Gerber's lawsuit against Marvel Comics: that is why Destroyer Duck is a warrior who battles a corporation called Godcorp.

Eclipse also published the original *Zot!* series (1984–1990), the delightful and upbeat creation of writer/artist Scott McCloud, who is now best known for his landmark book about the comics medium, *Understanding Comics* (1993). One of the first important American comics influenced by the visual style of Japanese manga, *Zot!* starred Zachary T. Paleozogt, aka Zot, a teenage superhero from a parallel Earth. Other major characters included his leading lady, Jenny Weaver, and the villainous Dekko, a cyborg who resembled the Chrysler Building. McCloud did a new *Zot!* webcomic in 2000, and HarperCollins published a collected edition of the original series in 2008. *—AMC & PS*

Elektra

In his initial encounter with Elektra in *Daredevil* #168 (January 1981), Marvel Comics' sightless Man without Fear receives from her the blunt end of a dagger to the back of his head, then a merciless kick across his jaw, proving that issue's cover copy to be no hyperbole: "Once he loved her … now she is his most deadly enemy!"

"Elektra came into existence simply because I wanted Daredevil to have a femme fatale," comments writer/penciler Frank Miller in Les Daniels' historical volume *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics* (1991). Yet "simply" never applies to Miller's complex work. Elektra Natchios, once the college love of law student Matt Murdock, Daredevil's alter ego, retreats from her boyfriend and society after her father, a Greek envoy, is assassinated. Emotionally poisoned by her father's murder, she embarks upon a Zen-like quest to find purpose in her life, receiving martial-arts training first from a teacher in Japan, and then in a mysterious Arctic retreat, from Stick, the sensei who similarly instructed Murdock. Too indignant to become a noble warrior, Elektra allies herself with the Hand, a cult of ninjas that manipulates her into executing her original teacher in a deadly rite of passage. Her life now has direction: Armed with a pair of three-pronged blades called sai, the crimson-clad Elektra becomes an executioner for hire. Single-handedly plowing through throngs of gangsters, assassins, and ninjas alike, Elektra ricochets her sai off of walls with staggering accuracy while spinning, ducking, punching, and kicking, leaving no foe standing.



Elektra #3 © 2001 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Greg Horn.)

At the time of her debut in late 1980, Elektra defied the stereotype of the classic superheroine, that prim, altruistic mighty maid of previous decades who had slipped into cliché. Elektra was a female character unlike anything comic-book readers had seen before: Determined, self-assured, and vicious, she chose not to veil her identity behind a mask or alter ego—she was Elektra, the assassin—nothing more, nothing less. Although she was a killer, Elektra was a symbol of empowerment: *Women no longer have to be victims*, her actions spoke. Miller may have been "simply" creating a femme fatale with Elektra, but in the process he redefined the superheroine for the 1980s and beyond. And unlike the female love interests that had previously been introduced in comics, Elektra emerged not as a disposable character, but as an equal to her lover.

Elektra's saga continued throughout intermittent issues of Miller's *Daredevil* run (as well as in a 1981 solo story by Miller in Marvel's black-and-white anthology magazine, *Bizarre Adventures*). The assassin had a heart, readers discovered, as she still loved Murdock, the blind man behind the devil mask, affording her character emotional complexity beyond her brutality. Yet that bond was overpowered by their wills: Elektra was committed to serve as the executioner for Daredevil's foe the Kingpin, while the heroic Daredevil was pledged to stop her. In *Daredevil* #181 (1982), Elektra was stopped—by another assassin, Bullseye, who skewered her to regain his position in Kingpin's corner. Mortally wounded, Elektra crawled to Murdock's home and died in her lover's arms. Unable to accept the passing of such a forceful spirit, Murdock exhumed her in the very next issue for firsthand proof that Elektra was indeed dead. A mere five months later, a story written and penciled by Miller—"What if Bullseye Had Not Killed Elektra?"—was published in *What If?* #35, but it merely teased readers with make-believe.

Elektra lived again, however. Miller resurrected her in *Daredevil* #190 (1983), by metaphysically cleansing her soul. The character resurfaced, first in *The Elektra Saga* (1984), a four-issue repackaging (with new material added) of her *Daredevil* appearances, then months later in what would be creator Miller's banner year.

That year was 1986. Miller returned to *Daredevil,* but only as writer for a brief, critically acclaimed stint, and produced his magnum opus *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* for DC Comics. *Elektra: Assassin,* launched in August 1986, reunited author Miller with his popular creation in an eight-issue postmodern prequel to her *Daredevil* appearances. Lavishly painted by Bill Sienkiewicz, *Elektra: Assassin* pitted Elektra against a pigheaded federal agent and a demon bent on starting a nuclear war. Sienkiewicz's experimental art style and Miller's scathing political commentary made *Elektra: Assassin* a controversial milestone for Marvel Comics.

By the 1990s, more superheroines had followed Elektra's edgy lead—Avengelyne and Shi, for example—dulling some of the assassin's uniqueness. Yet Marvel consistently maintained a presence for the character. A four-issue *Elektra* miniseries was published in 1995, followed by more reprints of the original Miller material and a crossover with Image Comics' Cyblade in early 1997. In July of that year, Marvel released *Elektra* #1, an ongoing monthly comic. Daredevil guest-starred in the first issue and Bullseye surfaced shortly thereafter. Without Miller's participation, however, and with the embittered Elektra being out of place in the mainstream Marvel universe, the series died after nineteen issues.

In the 2000s, editorial changes at Marvel Comics helped Elektra regain her stature. Some of the publisher's grittier characters have been allowed to explore explicit themes in the company's Marvel Knights and MAX imprints. After co-starring with the immensely popular X-Man Wolverine in the three-issue *Elektra & Wolverine: The Redeemer* (2001), Elektra was back on the stands in September of that year in a new and appropriately violent series. In her solo adventures, Elektra's marks are clearly criminals; however, despite their wrongdoings she brutally assassinates them, making her a villain (or, at best, an anti-heroine) in the eyes of the authorities in the comics, and also from the perspective of some readers.

Elektra's profile received another boost with the release of the live-action movie *Daredevil* (2003), starring Ben Affleck in the lead. *Daredevil* appropriated much of Miller's material from his first run on the comic book, including the hero's relationship with Elektra, portrayed by actress Jennifer Garner. Garner's interpretation of the character captivated viewers, including young girls, elevating Elektra from cult-comic status to mass-media acclaim. At the time of the release of *Daredevil,* Garner commented, "I wish that I had read *Elektra* when I was growing up because I think that she's very empowering to young women. I can't pass up the comics now; I have to stop and see if there's a new *Elektra* out." Garner went on to star in the 2005 *Elektra* film directed by Rob Bowman for Twentieth Century Fox. —*ME*

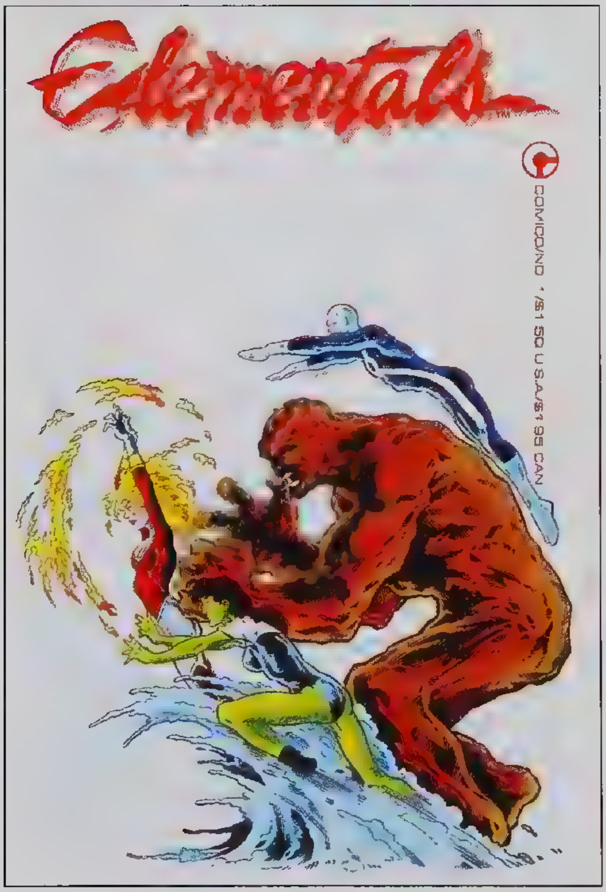
Elementals

Earth, wind, fire, water. Element-based superpowers may seem routine in the world of superheroes—Geo-Force, Swamp Thing, Storm, Human Torch, and Aquaman are just a few of the characters who possess them—but in the hands of creator Bill Willingham, they were anything but pedestrian. Premiering in Texas Comics' *Justice Machine Annual* #1 (1984), the Elementals were four ordinary, unrelated people—Tommy Czuchra, a precocious fourteen-year-old orphan; Jeff Murphy, a thrill-seeking professional pilot; Jeanette Crane, a passionate Los Angeles cop; and Rebecca Golden, a pampered heiress—who die. But not for long.

They return from the grave with abilities that connect them to the planet's natural order. Czuchra can transform into the superstrong Monolith, a being of living stone. Murphy becomes Vortex, able to soar at fantastic speeds and project concussive blasts. Crane pyro-kinetically masters fire and heat immunity. Golden—who now has green skin, and webbed fingers and toes—becomes Fathom (no relation to Mike Turner's similarly named heroine), manipulating (and even *becoming*) water. In the first story arc, "The Natural Order," writer/artist Willingham pushes the envelope by delving into subject matter that Marvel and DC Comics (at the time) considered taboo: the social and psychological repercussions of resurrection from the dead, and graphic explorations of violence and sociopathic behavior.

Independent publisher, Comico the Comic Company, picked up Willingham's creator-owned superteam shortly after the Texas Comics debut and issued *Elementals* #1 in 1984. Erratically released at first, *Elementals* garnered a loyal fan base, largely due to Willingham's provocative creative voice. As a writer, he stretched with each installment; over time, he addressed occultism, child abuse, sexual identity, religious obsession, immoral ministers, depression, and suicide, all while delivering well-paced, solidly scripted superhero stories. A disciple of folklore, Willingham also introduced fantasy themes into *Elementals*, with storybook and mythological characters appearing, territory he later continued to cover by writing the critically acclaimed series *Fables* (2002–present) for DC Comics' Vertigo imprint. As an artist, Willingham matured with each issue; while starting as a competent copycat (popular *Batman* and *Micronauts* artist Michael Golden's influence is quite obvious in his early work), Willingham always commanded a firm grasp of storytelling, and blossomed into a remarkably talented illustrator.

But Willingham came and went, and *Elementals* issues written and drawn by others lacked his magic and verve. In early 1989, Comico devised a "best of both worlds" scenario to keep Willingham on the title *and* publish what had become a strong seller for the company on a monthly schedule: *Elementals* was relaunched with vol. 2 issue #1, with Willingham scripting and providing cover art, but with Mike Leeke and Mike Chen on interior art (superstar artist Adam Hughes, then an up-and-comer, guest-penciled *Elementals* #12). This plan worked well—until bankruptcy forced Comico to close its doors in the early 1990s. Not long thereafter, a new financier revived Comico and pur-



Elementals #1 © 1984 COMICO the Comic Company. (Cover art by Bill Willingham and Bill Anderson.)

chased *Elementals* from its creator. Willingham and the artists and editors involved with the earlier, groundbreaking series chose not to participate in this new venture, and the new publisher pandered to the marketplace with some gratuitously exploitative comics involving the characters (including *Elementals* Sex *Special* #1–#4 and *Elementals Sexy Lingerie Special* #1). The new Comico was dead by the mid-1990s, and it took *Elementals* to the grave with it, an unfortunate conclusion to a once-celebrated series. *—ME*

Elongated Man

The perennial backup character, the Elongated Man, has brightened up numerous DC comics since his introduction in the pages of *The Flash* #112 in 1960 (by Gardner Fox and Carmine Infantino). The Elongated Man was Ralph Dibny, who developed a fascination for circus "India rubber men" and eventually discovered that their stretching ability was derived from a soft drink called Gingold. Dibny found that by taking a concentrated drink of the liquid he could alter the cellular properties of his tissue and so stretch any part of his body to incredible length. Gingold's only drawback was its tendency to lose its effect after twenty-four hours, resulting in all manner of hilarious scrapes.

After his first appearance, reader response was so positive that the Elongated Man became a regular guest in the *Flash* strip for the next couple of years. Not only was the character unusual in his lighthearted approach to life but he had also, by his third appearance, abandoned his secret identity and married his girlfriend, glamorous socialite Sue Dearborn (who would join him on his many adventures). With a rosy outlook on life, matched by a colossal, fame-seeking ego, Dibny decided to earn his living by making personal appearances across the country. Nearly every story started with the Dibnys driving into a fresh town and coming across a quirky mystery or a robbery of some sort; in a nice touch, his nose would begin to twitch whenever a puzzle was about to present itself.

When Fox and Infantino were recruited by *Flash* editor Julius Schwartz to help him revamp the flagging Batman titles, the three brought the Elongated Man with them, and for six years the "stretchable sleuth" was a welcome backup strip in *Detective Comics* (starting in issue #327). The first story set the tone for years to come: When the Dibnys stumble across a diamond smuggling racket, the Elongated Man uses his special talent to eavesdrop on the hoods, leading to the immortal line "An ear in the fireplace! He must be up on the roof!" As the strip's run developed, the intrepid duo continued to foil ingenious crimes and to solve complex conundrums, but they never once acquired the lineup of supervillains that plagued other, more serious heroes. In fact, much of the strip's appeal lay in its low-key charm, which was perfectly complemented by Infantino's sophisticated line work.

In the 1970s, Elongated Man enjoyed occasional spots in the back pages of *The Flash* and *Detective Comics*, and finally joined the Justice League of America; his membership had previously been rejected on the grounds that Dibny exploited his powers for monetary gain. It was as a regular member of the Justice League, and later the Justice League Europe, that he gained his greatest popularity, allowing his constant cheerfulness to brighten up an otherwise somewhat dour group. This exposure culminated in the character's own solo comic (in a 1992 miniseries), a full thirty-two years after his first appearance; this proved to be a jolly romp through Europe.

But in the early twenty-first century, the fates of the charming, funny, and endearing Ralph and Sue Dibny took a dreadful turn. In the limited series *Identity Crisis* (2004), it was revealed that Sue had once been raped by the supervillain Doctor Light, and later Sue (while pregnant with Ralph's child) was killed by the Atom's ex-wife Jean Loring, who had suffered a mental breakdown. Subsequently, in the series *52* (2006–2007), Ralph was killed by the demon Neron. The series' final issue revealed that Ralph and Sue had been reunited as spirits, and operate as a pair of ghostly detectives.

In the Fox/Infantino series in *Detective Comics*, Ralph and Sue Dibny appeared to be inspired in part by Nick and Nora Charles, the witty married couple in Dashiell Hammett's detective novel *The Thin Man* (1934) and the movies based on it. After their deaths, Ralph and Sue seem also to be following in the footsteps of the fun-loving ghosts George and Marion Kerby from another classic novel, Thorne Smith's *Topper* (1926), and its film and TV adaptations.

The Elongated Man first appeared in animation in the television series *Justice League Unlimited,* voiced by Jeremy Pivan. He also teamed up with the similarly superpowered Plastic Man and Batman in an episode of *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* —*DAR & PS*

Eternals

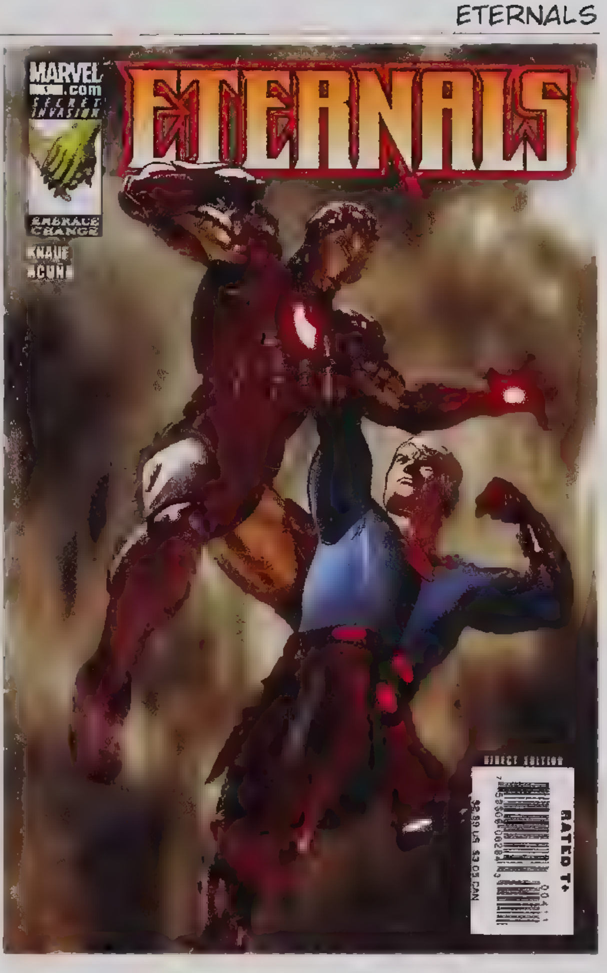
After introducing the New Gods at DC Comics, writer/artist Jack Kirby returned to Marvel Comics in the mid-1970s to create another race of godlike superhumans that made their debut in *The Eternals* Vol. 1 #1 (July 1976).

According to Kirby's series, a race of gigantic, armored, virtually all-powerful and enigmatic aliens called the Celestials visited the Earth in prehistoric times. They conducted genetic engineering experiments on ancestors of the human race, thereby creating two other, divergent races of humanity.

One of these races was the Eternals, superhuman beings who are virtually immortal. Each Eternal's mental control over his physical body makes him virtually unkillable. Eternals are superhumanly strong, can fly through self-levitation, and can project heat and concussive energy beams from their eyes and hands. Individual Eternals specialize in developing specific superpowers to a greater degree than other members of their race. A large enough group of Eternals can meld into a powerful, collective being called the Uni-Mind.

The other race created by the Celestials was the Deviants. They are a grotesque, genetically unstable race, and each Deviant differs in physical appearance from the others.

Over the course of human history, Eternals have inspired many of humanity's myths of gods and heroes of superhuman prowess. In contrast, over the ages humans have perceived the Deviants as devils and demons. Whereas the Eternals act as protectors of Earth, the Deviants once conquered much of humanity, before the sinking of Atlantis.



The Eternals #4 © 2008 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Daniel Acuña)

In recent times, the Celestials returned to Earth to spend fifty years observing humanity before delivering judgment on the human race. The series' leading character was Ikaris, an Eternal who had devoted his life to battling Deviants and monsters. And there were a variety of other important Eternals characters.

Zuras was based on the Greek god Zeus, and was ruler of the Eternals. Zuras's daughter was the feisty, beautiful Thena, who was based on Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war. Thena had a romantic liaison with Warlord Kro, an antiheroic member of the Deviants.

Sersi is the same character who appears in Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey,* under the name Circe. She specializes in mentally rearranging and transmuting the molecular structure of matter.

Celebrated for her hedonistic lifestyle and love of giving parties, Sersi can also be fierce and formidable in combat.

Makkari is based on the Roman god Mercury, and specializes in moving at superhuman speed. It was later established that two superheroes co-created by Kirby in the Golden Age for Timely Comics (now known as Marvel), Mercury (from *Red Raven Comics* #1, August 1940) and the Hurricane (from *Captain America Comics* #1, March 1941) were alternate identities for Makkari.

The Forgotten One was a great hero who helped inspire the tales of mythic figures like Hercules, but was later exiled by Zuras. He later assumed his former name of Gilgamesh, identifying him as the hero of the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the first great superhuman hero in literature.

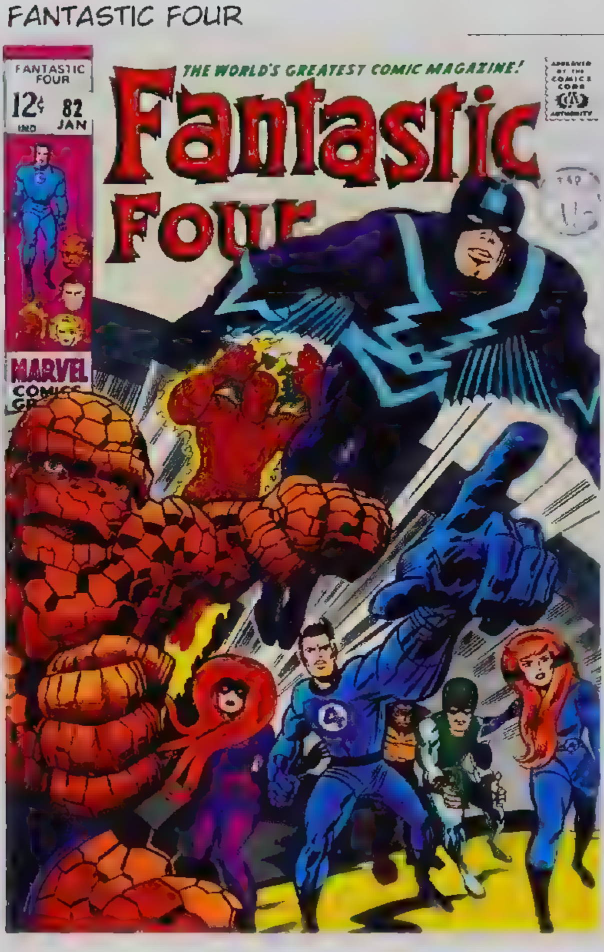
Kirby's original *Eternals* series ended with issue #19 (January 1978). Writer Roy Thomas had the Eternals appear as guest stars in *Thor*, making it clear that they were part of the Marvel universe. A maxi-series of *The Eternals* (Volume 2, 1985–1986) was written first by Peter B. Gillis, and later by Walter Simonson, with art by Sal Buscema. In this series Gillis and Buscema introduced a major villain, Lord Ghaur, high priest of the Deviants. Subsequently, Sersi and Gilgamesh both became members of the superhero team the Avengers. Neil Gaiman, the acclaimed fantasy writer and author of DC's *Sandman* series, and artist John Romita, Jr. collaborated on a new *Eternals* limited series (Vol. 3) that ran from 2006 to 2007. This was followed in 2008 by a new ongoing *Eternals* series (Vol. 4), which was canceled in 2009. —*PS*

Fantastic Four

"The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!"—this immodest subtitle displayed above the logo of *Fantastic Four* since its fourth issue—is no mere hyperbole. Still going strong in its fifth decade of publication, *Fantastic Four,* the series that spear headed the Marvel universe, has become its cornerstone.

Fantastic Four was the product of editorial decree and creative desperation. Beginning in the late 1950s, DC Comics had successfully resuscitated the superhero genre through its reintroduction of classic heroes like the Flash and Green Lantern. The Silver Age of comics (1956–1969) was underway. Martin Goodman, publisher of Marvel Comics, was informed, during a golf game with DC's publisher Jack Liebowitz, that DC's super hero books were selling exceptionally well, particularly their new *Justice League of America* series, which united Superman, Batman, and other popular characters. Marvel was known mainly for its monster comics, and Goodman realized that his line would benefit from a title starring a supergroup. He ordered his editor, Stan Lee, to create one. This directive came at an opportune time for Lee, who was tiring of writing and editing disposable pap for children and was on the brink of resigning from the company. Lee longed to script material with more profundity—stories featuring real people, with realistic foibles—and his wife encouraged him to make this mandated superteam the trial project for his aspirations.

Fantastic Four #1 (November 1961) introduced a quartet of new characters: Dr. Reed Richards, a pompous scientist and aerospace engineer; Susan (Sue) Storm, his lovely and somewhat reserved fiancée; Sue's hotheaded teen-age brother Johnny Storm, a car-racing enthusiast; and Richards' beefy and snappish longtime friend, pilot Ben Grimm. This group of four commandeers an untested spaceship of Richards' own design from the U.S. military, in a frantic but unsanctioned effort to beat "the Commies" (as Sue calls them) in the Space Race. Grimm protests, concerned over inadequate research into the effects of space radiation, but is sweet talked into participation by Sue, for whom he carries an unrequited passion. In orbit, the craft is flooded by cosmic rays ("I warned you about 'em!" yells Grimm) that genetically alter its passengers. Once returning to Earth, the quartet discover that they have been forever changed: Sue can fade in and out of view (and before long, project force fields) as the Invisible Girl; Grimm mutates into a freakish, rock-skinned powerhouse dubbed the Thing; arrogant Richards elongates into a plastic man who calls himself Mr. Fantastic; and Johnny erupts into flame, blazing through the skies as the Human Torch. "Together we have more power than any humans have ever possessed," submits Richards, who persuades this group to join forces as the Fantastic Four (FF).



Fantastic Four #82 © 1969 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jack Kirby and Joe Sinnott.)

Author Lee's co-architect was artist Jack Kirby, an industry superstar who, like Lee, was looking for a chance to stretch beyond the monster comics he'd recently illustrated for Marvel. Kirby's energetic and cinematic storytelling ("Nobody drew a strip like Jack Kirby," beamed Lee in his 2002 autobiography, *Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee*) earmarked *Fantastic Four* as something new, as did Lee's bouncy dialogue, which often placed the series' teammates in verbal conflict with each other—and physical conflict, too, via the playful ruckuses sparked by practical joker Torch and his target, the Thing. They were more than a team: They were a *family*, albeit a dysfunctional one.

Fantastic Four quickly became a triumph for Marvel, and Lee and Kirby's imaginations burst into hyperdrive. An array of fearsome foes appeared and reappeared, including, but certainly not limited to, the oafish Mole Man, enslaver of a subterranean race; Golden Age (1938–1954) anti-hero Sub-Mariner, also known as Prince Namor of the undersea kingdom of Atlantis, whose hatred of "surface dwellers" was quelled only by his love of the Invisible Girl; the alien Super-Skrull, who possessed *all* of the FF's awesome abilities; the manipulative Puppet Master, who could control the FF via miniature proxies; and the towering Galactus, who gained sustenance by absorbing the life forces of planets. Yet no menace was more insolent than Doctor Doom, whose hideously scarred face was hidden behind an ominous iron mask (it is rumored that Doom was the template for Darth Vader in George Lucas' *Star Wars* movies). Originally Richards' colleague Victor Von Doom, this despotic mastermind habitually returned to plague not only the FF but to engage Mr. Fantastic in intellectual battles, always with dire consequences.

Lee and Kirby ushered the FF—who operated from the Baxter Building, a skyscraper in midtown Manhattan—into a dizzying array of exciting adventures in exotic locales: the center of the Earth, the past, the subatomic Micro-World, and the treacherous void called the Negative Zone. Mr. Fantastic's unending array of technological gadgets assisted the FF in their exploits, most notably the aerodynamic Fantasti-car (which in its earliest incarnation resembled a flying bathtub), and the FF's own malleable uniforms, woven from "unstable molecules" that mimicked each hero's power (for example, the fabric stretched with Mr. Fantastic). Despite his brilliance, Richards could never find a permanent reversal of the Thing's tragic condition.

In *Fantastic Four Annual* #3 (1965), Reed and Sue were married (in a wedding crashed by a cadre of criminals), and a few years later their son Franklin was born. The Richards family was far from traditional, however: Franklin displayed dangerous superpowers, and Mr. Fantastic repeatedly ignored his wife and son by spending days holed up in his laboratory. A growing supporting cast was introduced: the Black Panther, Marvel's first African-American superhero; the Inhumans, a race of outcast superbeings; the Watcher, a chronicler of intergalactic events sworn to observe but not participate; and the Silver Surfer, the space-spanning herald of Galactus,

(L to R) Chris Evans, Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, and Michael Chiklis as the Fantastic Four in the 2007 film *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*. (20th Century-Fox/Marvel / The Kobal Collection)

who turned against his master at the urging of the Thing's blind girlfriend, Alicia Masters. Alicia, the daughter of the Puppet Master, became part of the FF's extended family, and helped soften the Thing's morose demeanor by "seeing" what only she could: the kind inner soul of Grimm.

Two renowned comics catch phrases were born early in *Fantastic Four*'s run: Johnny's "Flame on!," which he exclaimed when soaring into action as the Torch, and the Thing's high-spirited battle charge, "It's clobberin' time!" The Human Torch was the initial breakout member, starring in solo adventures in *Strange Tales* and routinely appearing in *The Amazing Spider-Man*, but as the Thing's personality changed from bitter outsider to lovable grouch, by the mid-1960s Grimm emerged as the FF's most popular player.

In 1967, the FF's acclaim extended beyond comic books. *The Fantastic Four* (1967–1970), an animated television series produced by Hanna-Barbera, borrowed heavily from the Lee/Kirby comics The cartoon ignited a firestorm of merchandizing, including storybooks, flicker rings, coloring books, Halloween costumes, and puzzles.

In the 1970s, changes disrupted the status quo of *Fantastic Four*. A dispute involving story contributions divided the Lee/Kirby team, and before long both vacated the book. For years, a variety of creators ventured in and out of the title (artist John Buscema distinguished himself by his lengthy run on the series in the 1970s), some making minor contributions to the canon, others leaving a larger mark. The Thing headlined the long-running team-up title *Marvel Two-in-One* (1974–1983), Reed and Sue suffered marital problems, and members came and went from the team, being temporarily replaced by heroes like Power Man and Medusa.

By the late 1970s, several Marvel superheroes were starring on live-action television on CBS. The Human Torch was optioned for an unrealized live-action film, precluding his inclusion in the FF's second animated series, *The New Fantastic Four* (1978), on rival network NBC. (A comics urban legend contends that the Torch wasn't allowed on the 'toon due to the network's concerns that impressionable children would set themselves ablaze in emulation.) Johnny Storm was replaced in the show by a comical robot named Herbie. The following season, NBC aired *Fred and Barney Meet the Thing*, a *Flintstones* continuation that included shorts featuring a teenage version of "Benjy" Grimm who transformed into the ever-lovin' Thing by uniting two separated pieces of a ring and shouting, "Thing Ring, do your thing!" Both cartoons strayed too far from the FF source material and died quickly.

Writer/artist John Byrne's 1980s run on the *Fantastic Four* comic book (#232–#292, July 1981–July 1986) spanned half the decade and featured such memorable events as the induction of the She-Hulk as a temporary member, the evolution of the once-meek Invisible Girl into the forceful and liberated Invisible *Woman*, the shocking romance between the Torch and the Thing's girlfriend Alicia, and the transformation of Sue into the villainess Malice. Grimm segued from *Marvel-Two-in-One* into his own monthly title, *The Thing* (1983–1986), which took him into the cosmos as a space explorer and into the sports arena as a professional wrestler.

The 1990s did not bode well for *Fantastic Four*. Convoluted story lines impeded the series continuity, and sales dropped. The "Heroes Reborn" rebooting of *Fantastic Four* in 1996 was undone in 1998, when the original continuity was restored. In the 2000s, the Human Torch was spun off into his own series, and *Fantastic Four* was restored to its former glory by fan-favorite writer Mark Waid and artist Mike Wieringo. A 2003 corporate decision to remove Waid and Wieringo from *FF* was met by such overwhelming backlash from readers that the move was soon reversed. An alternate-universe title featuring a younger version of the team, *Ultimate Fantastic Four*, premiered in early 2004, and a third ongoing FF series, *4* (a.k.a. *Knights 4*), a harder-edged interpretation produced by the creative team originally contracted to replace Waid and Wieringo, bowed in 2004. Another FF milestone: In continuous publication since 1961, the Invisible Girl/Woman has earned the distinction of being in print longer than every comics superheroine except for Wonder Woman.

Reed and Sue now have a daughter, Valeria, who first appeared in *Fantastic Four* Vol. 3 #15 (March 1999) and is a genius like her father. Her brother Franklin stars in *Franklin Richards: Son of a Genius*, a delightful series of specials drawn, and either written or co-written, by Chris Eliopoulos, which began in 2005. Not part of official continuity, this series pairs Franklin with H.E.R.B.I.E., the robot created for the 1978 *Fantastic Four* animated series.

This same year, a major live action *Fantastic Four* movie was finally released by Twentieth Century Fox. Directed by Tim Story, it starred Ioan Gruffudd as Mr. Fantastic, Jessica Alba as the Invisible Woman, Chris Evans as the Human Torch, Michael Chiklis as the Thing, and Julian McMahon as Doctor Doom. Stan Lee usually makes Hitchcock-like cameo appearances in films based on Marvel series he co-created, and in this movie he played one of his own characters, the Fantastic Four's mailman Willie Lumpkin. A sequel, *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*, directed by Story, starring the same leading actors, followed in 2007. This time Stan Lee played himself, being ejected from the wedding of Reed Richards and Sue Storm, just as he had been in their wedding in the comic book *Fantastic Four Annual* #3 (1965)! A new animated TV series, *Fantastic Four: World's Greatest Heroes*, premiered in 2006 on Cartoon Network. In 2009 and 2010 it was reported that Fox is developing a new *Fantastic Four* movie, rebooting the film franchise.

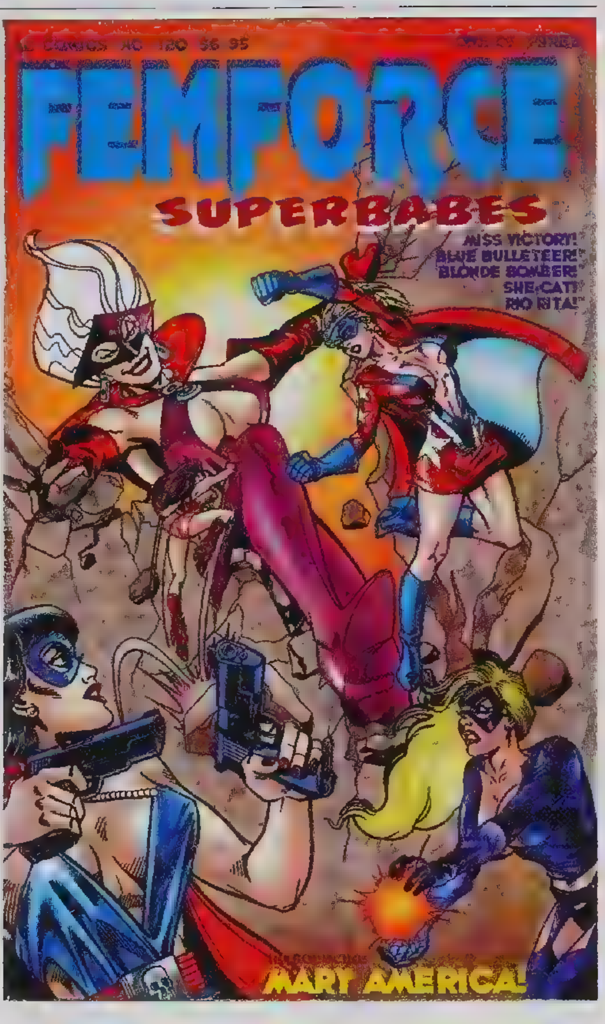
Amidst their popularity—in a controversial story published in 2011—Johnny Storm, the Human Torch, was apparently killed. The Fantastic Four renamed themselves the Future Foundation, and Spider-Man took Johnny's place on the team. Although disagreements and personal quests have often separated the Fantastic Four, their mutual affection inevitably reunites them. It's that bond between Mr. Fantastic, the Invisible Woman, the Thing, and the Human Torch that will always make their series "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!" *—ME & PS*

Femforce

The culmination of many long years spent laboring in the vineyards of comics fandom, mainstream publishing, and independent publishing, Femforce was the brainchild of AC Comics founder Bill Black. Noted by AC writer and editor Mark Heike as being the first successful all-female superhero team, Femforce evolved out of the explosion of inexpensively produced—and for a brief time, highly profitable—black-and-white comics publishing that occurred in the mid-1980s, a period of wild growth for the industry, its publishers, and its direct-market (specialty shop) retailers.

As the market for such titles quickly grew glutted, Black established a unique publishing niche for AC by focusing on a conspicuously underrepresented area of the superhero genre: female protagonists, which, thanks to his earlier publishing ventures, Black possessed in abundance. In 1985, the ongoing *Femforce* series, created largely by utilizing characters from earlier AC comic books, landed on America's comics racks. The title quickly distinguished itself from most other contemporary superheroic fare by portraying its powerful female leads in an appealingly cheesecake "Good Girl" art style, replete with characterization and humor. The regular series also bucked the era's prevailing independent comics trend by printing in full color.

Femforce, which quickly became AC's flagship title, was mainly composed of female characters from the universe of Black's principal superhero, Captain Paragon. The team, whose membership has fluctuated over the years, was led by the blonde, statuesque Ms. Victory, a patriotic heroine. Victory's alter ego, Dr. Joan Wayne, was a U.S. government biogeneticist during the 1940s, when she invented a pumped-up vitamin compound known as V-47. This discovery granted her superstrength and the power of flight, as well as giving her perpetual youth while she was in her superheroine guise, thus affording her an excellent disguise. As the years wore on, Wayne aged into an old woman while Victory remained young. Originally known as "Miss Victory," she adopted the more contemporary "Ms." honorific as the years went on. Kept strong and youthful by the V-47 compound, Ms. Victory (now Paragon's wife) can look forward to many more decades of service as one of America's most stalwart protectors.


FEMFORCE
SUPERBABES
MISS VICTORY!
BLUE BULLETEER!
BLONDE BOMBER!
SHE-CAT!
RIO RITA!
MARY AMERICA!

Femforce #120 © 2003 AC Comics. (Cover art by Mark and Stephanie Heike.)

Among the rank-and-file members of Femforce are She-Cat, a free spirit whose feline powers originated from an encounter with the evil cat goddess Sekhmet. Savage and noble natures are constantly at war within She-Cat, and the feline metaphor accurately describes both her razor-sharp claws and her well honed sexuality. Nightveil (a.k.a. Laura Wright, the Blue Bulleteer), an Earth heroine who gained sorcerous abilities on the extradimensional world of Dark Dhagor, is a brooding woman of mystery and beauty. Evolved from a Fox Comics Phantom Lady look-alike of the 1940s, Nightveil derives her mystic powers partly from her arcane Cloak of Darkness, which she struggles to control and use for good purposes, though she realizes that its dark nature may cause her demise. One of the more popular members of the group, Nightveil has headlined several comics of her own.

Silver-tressed Silva Synn has big hair, big brains, and a major sweet tooth; not only can she teleport using subspatial wormholes, she also has the ability to create mentally generated objects—called "synnestrophic constructs"—that remain solid as long as she maintains her concentration. "Too Tall" Tara Fremont, an environmentalist, marine biologist, and latter-day "jungle girl" (though not in the Sheena mold, since she never wears animal skins), uses the enormous wealth of her father (industrialist T. C. Fremont) to protect the planet's many endangered species from extinction; thanks to a variant of Ms. Victory's V-47 serum, Fremont has also acquired the power to grow to enormous proportions, à la the 50-Foot Woman of the classic 1950s sci-fi film. Stardust is a pacifist extraterrestrial scientist who hails from the matriarchal world of Rur; her body gathers and concentrates stellar energy, which she can use either as a weapon or as a means of flight. An outsider among humans, "Dusty" continually struggles to understand Earth's aggressive, conflict-ridden culture. Colt (Valencia Kirk), the diminutive mistress of all manner of weaponry and martial arts, and Rayda (Dyna Morisi), a "human dynamo," are auxiliary members.

Other characters that have seen action as members or allies of Femforce include Kitten, the female partner of Catman (Holyoke Publishing's Golden Age hero, revived by Black), as well as such forgotten Golden Age (1938–1954) heroines as Yankee Girl, Miss Masque, and Jetgirl. Femforce's ranks sometimes swell nearly to Avengers proportions, mainly because of a surfeit of eager and evocatively named villains, including Alizarin Crimson, the Black Shroud, Capricorn, Darkfire, the Fearforce, Fem Paragon, Lady Luger, the Shimmerer, and Stella Stargaze, as well as ambiguous sometime-allies, who as often as not are foes, such as the antisocial Rad (actually Ms. Victory's daughter) and the giantess Garganta.

By the late 1980s, as independent comics sales declined, Black converted *Femforce* into a black-and-white format; the title (along with its several spin-off miniseries and one-shots) remained AC's only consistently solid seller, both in the direct-sales market and via mail order. By 1990, AC Comics, along with the rest of the industry, was growing steadily. AC's staff grew as well; *Femforce* acquired a new writer-artist known only as "The Count," and artist Brad Gorby also began contributing to the positive fan-reaction the series was receiving. With the further assistance of new associate editor Heike (a major contributing factor as the multi-talented Heike wrote, drew, and inked stories), Black was able to begin releasing *Femforce* on a monthly schedule.

The year 1990 also saw the launch of two new Femforce-related titles: *Good Girl Art Quarterly* (which consisted largely of color reprints of Golden Age cheesecake stories, led by a new Femforce tale, also in color), and *She-Cat* (a black-and-white comic devoted to the feral feline Femforce member). In an effort to improve the quality and consistency of AC's Femforce line, Black took over all the writing chores on the property, even as the rest of the AC stable continued to expand. *Femforce Up Close*, a color title that focused on individual Femforce members, debuted in 1992, complementing *Jungle Girls*, which began its sixteen-issue run in 1988 and presented black-and-white Golden Age reprints as well as new tales of Tara, Femforce's jungle queen. To address the increased demand for Femforce artwork, Black hired veteran Marvel Comics great Dick Ayers, whose work Black had admired for decades.

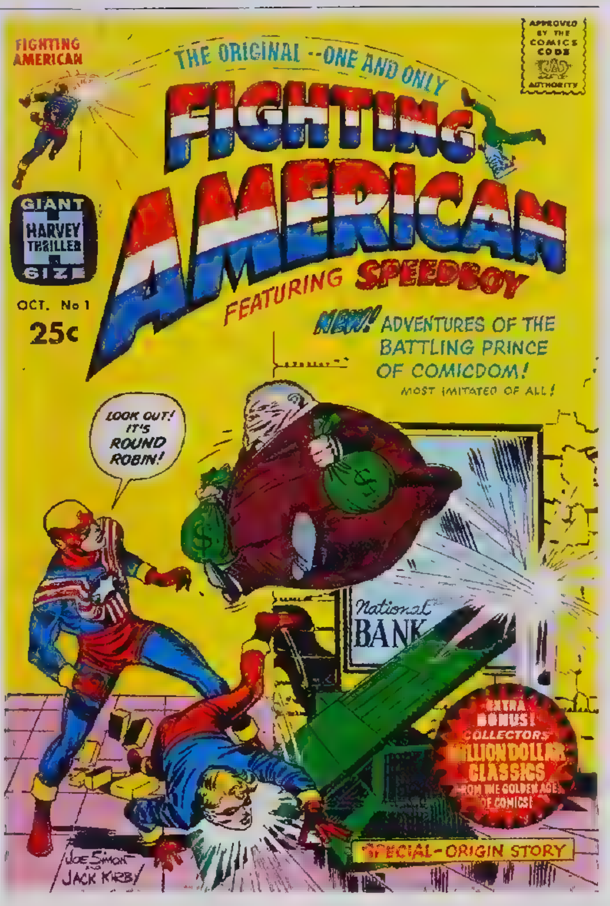
While sales of most of the AC Comics line declined during the lean times of the mid-1990s, the up-and-coming "Bad Girl" trend—exemplified by such lucrative characters as Marvel's Elektra, DC's Catwoman, Dark Horse's Barb Wire, and Crusade Comics' Shi—helped keep *Femforce* and its spin-offs afloat. All the while, the property somehow managed to hang onto an upbeat, relatively nonviolent image, despite the increased prevalence of "gritty" superhero fare that was becoming almost *de rigueur* across the comics industry. By 1998, against all odds, Black's relatively tiny company released the one-hundredth issue of *Femforce* (only 228 previous comic-book series have attained the this distinguished mark). AC was also reaping considerable profits from Femforce T-shirts, art portfolios, and other paraphernalia bearing the likenesses of AC's well-upholstered heroines.

As the third millennium unfolds, Femforce's future remains bright, due in no small part to Black's nostalgic Golden Age preservationist vision and his continued hands-on involvement with the stories. Still published as an ongoing title today, a summer 2003 story arc titled "Femforce: Superbabes"—spanning issues #120–#122—heated up summer sales. Spearheaded by Heike, who enlisted such artistic luminaries as Joe Staton and Will Meugniot (among others) to contribute stories demonstrating their own creative visions of Femforce-like characters, the three-issue arc proved popular.

Today Femforce fans remain fascinated with Black's unique characterizations of Ms. Victory, Nightveil, Synn, She-Cat, Tara, and Stardust, the core members of the team. Among the newest members of the Femforce creative stable are artists Jeff Austin, Mark Glidden, and Ed Coutts, and writers Paul Monsky and Chris Irving. New Femforce comics debuted in 2010 and 2011, and *Nightveil: Witchwar*, a live-action DVD that brings Nightveil to life, ignited several other direct-to-DVD films featuring Nightveil, Stormy Tempest, Garganta, and Blue Bulleteer. *—MAM & GM*

Fighting American

The 1950s comics scene was dominated by horror and crime comics, or witch hunts and scare stories, and was characterized by long-established comic-book companies going under. Into this unpromising environment Joe Simon and Jack Kirby launched *Fighting American* in 1954 (published by Prize Comics), which the creative duo hailed as the first superhero satire in comics history. Interestingly, Marvel Comics had revived Captain America just eight months earlier, and it is intriguing to ponder if Simon and Kirby created the Fighting American as a riposte to their earlier superhero creation. Indeed, the pair's avowed aim was to make the public forget Captain America entirely; clearly, this did not happen.


FIGHTING AMERICAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE ORIGINAL --ONE AND ONLY
FIGHTING AMERICAN
FEATURING SPEEDBOY
GIANT HARVEY THRILLER SIZE
OCT. No 1
25¢
NEW! ADVENTURES OF THE BATTLING PRINCE OF COMICDOM! MOST IMITATED OF ALL!
LOOK OUT! IT'S ROUND ROBIN!
National BANK
EXTRA BONUS! COLLECTORS MILLION DOLLAR CLASSICS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS!
SPECIAL-ORIGIN STORY
JOE SIMON JACK KIRBY

Fighting American #1 © 1966 Harvey Comics. (Cover art by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon.)

The first issue of *Fighting American* introduced readers to patriotic television newscaster Johnny Flagg, a war hero much given to warning America about the dangers of communism. Those self-same communist agitators promptly beat him close to death, but on his deathbed he asks his feeble brother Nelson (who had been scripting Johnny's red-baiting speeches all along) to carry on his fight. Days later, the army summons Nelson to a secret lab where Johnny's revitalized body has been dressed in a stylish red, white, and blue costume. In the ensuing operation, Nelson's brain is transferred to Johnny's body and the fearless Fighting American is born; what happened to Nelson's body is never revealed (and Nelson himself does not refer to the event again).

Just as Captain America had a sidekick, the Fighting American soon acquired his own young assistant, Speedboy, a young pageboy who stumbled across Johnny/Nelson's secret identity and was instantly recruited to the cause. Again, like Captain America's 1950s adventures, the Fighting American was rabidly anticommunist, although Simon and Kirby played it all strictly for laughs. Indeed, there has never been a stranger collection of bizarre villains in comics history. Among the varied villains on display, the unsuspecting reader could come across the likes of Invisible Irving, Double Header (who, of course, had two heads), Hotsky Trotsky, Poison Ivan, Count Yuscha Liffso, Superkhakalovitch, and Square Hair Malloy. Not content with outlandish bad guys, the strip also featured weird guest stars like Uncle Samurai, Shiskabob the Sorcerer, and Yafata's Moustache, along with a bevy of buxom femme fatales, including Charity Bizarre, Scarlet O'Haircut, and Lucy Liverwurst.

Simon and Kirby were long-established comics pros but their roots were in the unsophisticated, hard-living slums of New York and the comic reflected this environment. The humor was broad, slapstick comedy, full of joke Yiddish names, ethnic stereotypes, and resolute political incorrectness. In spite of (or because of) this, the feature was genuinely funny. However, the mid-1950s were not a good time for superheroes, and *Fighting American* lasted a mere seven issues. Eleven years later (in 1966), Simon revived the comic during his short-lived stint as an editor at Harvey Comics; this comic combined reprints with strips intended for the old, unpublished eighth issue. Harvey pulled the plug on its superheroes with only one issue released, even though a second issue was ready for printing, but Simon retained his copyright on the character, waiting for the right moment to unleash his hero again.

After a long wait, the character returned in 1989, in a deluxe hardback compilation of his 1950s strips, issued by Marvel Comics. This heralded a decade of bizarre miniseries. The first of these, published by DC Comics in 1994, retold the character's origin story but updated it to the present day, dumping the treacherous commies but keeping the strange villains (such as the Media Circus and the Gross National Product). The Fighting American's next outing had as convoluted an origin as any comic of recent years. In the mid-1990s, Marvel revamped a host of its comics in a campaign called "Heroes Reborn." One of these—Captain America—was produced by the controversial Rob Liefeld. The Heroes Reborn line was jettisoned after a year, but Liefeld had already drawn some more issues that he was determined to use, and so he made some art changes, renamed the hero Agent America, and prepared to release it under his own company, Awesome Entertainment. Marvel immediately sued over the blatant similarities to its legendary Captain America, but Liefeld countered by licensing the Fighting American from Joe Simon, changing his leading characters (again), and redrawing the Nazis as communists. Such was the fervor for superheroes at the time that the *Fighting American* miniseries (in 1997) led to two further outings over the next couple of years. Neither added much to the hero's reputation, but the idea that new Fighting American stories came out of old Captain America strips was deliciously ironic.

While no new comics have appeared since 1999, the Fighting American was the inspiration behind Alan Moore's hilarious superhero spoof, "The First American" in *Tomorrow Stories,* and so his legacy lives on. —*DAR*

Firestorm

Created by writer Gerry Conway and artist Allen Milgrom for DC Comics (*Firestorm* #1, 1978), Firestorm is unique among nuclear-powered superheroes, representing a transition between the atomic-generated heroes of the 1960s (mainstays such as Spider-Man and the X-Men, characters for whom nuclear power is a potent yet ultimately benign force) and the distrust of all things nuclear that marked the post–Three Mile Island 1980s. Firestorm stands astride the mushroom clouds of the Nuclear Age's heyday and the postmodern Earth-goddess spiritualism of the 1990s New Age.

On the eve of the opening of the controversial and experimental Hudson Nuclear Facility, the Earth Spirit (known alternatively as Gaia or Maya) selects nuclear physicist Martin Stein to be

Earth's latest fire elemental. When radical environmentalist Edward Earhart attempts to destroy the plant, Stein is knocked unconscious. One of Earhart's confederates, a high-school jock named Ronnie Raymond, has a change of heart and tries to stop the sabotage, only to be irradiated along with Stein, to whom Earhart has shackled him inside the main reactor room. Stein and Raymond find themselves combined into a single, nuclear-powered form—that of the flame-headed superbeing known as Firestorm.

Because Raymond is conscious at the time of his melding to the insensate Stein, the teen's impulsive, wise-guy personality dominates Firestorm's consciousness; Stein's calmer, more staid mind runs in the background, lending its expert scientific guidance to Raymond in the use of his power to alter the atomic structure of inorganic matter. (Firestorm later forswears this ability because of its tendency to make the objects he transmutes unstable.) Firestorm can also fly at light-speed, release intense blasts of nuclear-generated fire and heat through his hands and eyes, pass through solid objects, control flames and fire (which he can also use as an energy source to enable him to grow or shrink), and even teleport himself to any open flame on Earth. In addition, he has the ability to transform back into his two human forms—with Stein at first having no recollection of Firestorm's adventures, unlike Raymond. Operating initially as a fairly standard villain-foiling, costumed superhero—albeit a hero with an awkward, twofold secret identity—Firestorm at first knows nothing of his status as a fire elemental, and must learn to master his powers gradually over time (with Stein's help). Firestorm's one major weakness is a tendency to suffer mental "attacks" during which the bond between Raymond and Stein suddenly weakens, requiring intense concentration on Raymond's part in order to maintain Firestorm's powers.

Unfortunately for the fused fissile hero, his first series lasted only five issues before succumbing to the so-called "DC implosion" of 1978, a bleak time characterized by slumping comics sales and the cancellation of a multitude of DC titles (the aborted sixth issue of *Firestorm* was published in 1978 under the title *Canceled Comics Cavalcade* #1). Firestorm was subsequently relegated to guest-star status in such series as *DC Comics Presents, Justice League of America, Flash,* and *The Brave and the Bold.* Four years later, the burgeoning comics specialty shop (or direct-sales) market had significantly increased sales across the comics industry, allowing *The Fury of Firestorm, the Nuclear Man* to flourish as a monthly series. Initially written by Conway with pencils by Pat Broderick, this comic (whose title was shortened in 1987 to *Firestorm, the Nuclear Man* with issue #65) lasted until its one hundredth issue (1990), demonstrating a longevity that is remarkable in modern superhero comics. During this run, Firestorm becomes a key member of the Justice League of America and fights such adversaries as Black Bison (a superpowered Native American), Killer Frost (a cold-themed Justice League villain with the ability to freeze her enemies), the explosive Plastique, a foul-weather foe called the Typhoon, the nuclear-powered Soviet superhero Pozhar, and even Jack Kirby's nigh-omnipotent conqueror Darkseid.

Under the creative tenure of writer John Ostrander, and such artists as Joe Brozowski, J. J. Birch, Ross Andru, and Tom Mandrake, Firestorm (with Stein, now an aware and willing participant in Firestorm's trifold existence, and suffering from an inoperable, radiation-induced brain tumor) attempts to disarm the Soviet Union to bring about world peace. This leads to a clash with the Russian hero Pozhar (Mikhail Denisovitch Arkadin, who gained his powers during the nuclear mishap at Chernobyl, and was introduced in *Fury of Firestorm* #63, 1987), which brings on a "mental attack" that splits Firestorm into his two component entities. Caught in a subsequent nuclear explosion with Arkadin, Raymond becomes melded with the Russian (*Firestorm Annual* #5, 1987). This re-fusion yields a second, all-new Firestorm who resembles an incendiary god out of myth more than a traditional spandex-clad superhero. The revamped champion also has his own independent personality (based upon Stein's), into which Raymond and Pozhar are submerged, as Firestorm takes his place among the pantheon of Earth's elemental protectors. He also becomes aware for the first time of his status as a divinely selected fire elemental and becomes increasingly distant from other superheroes; protecting the environment is now his primary focus. Firestorm's new persona is cold and analytical at first, gradually learning over time to trust his developing emotions and "go with his gut" during crisis situations. Despite these radical changes and new priorities, Firestorm never hesitates to assist any human being in distress.

Cured of his brain tumor years later, Stein helps the Raymond-Arkadin Firestorm fight an atomic villain named Brimstone, who tries to use the sun's energies to incinerate Earth. During the battle Firestorm is split into his constituent parts (Raymond and Pozhar), and Stein is caught in a nuclear blast that transforms him into another Firestorm—all by himself, as the Earth goddess had intended all along. The reborn Firestorm ultimately uses a black hole to defeat Brimstone after a fierce contretemps on the surface of the sun itself. Stein/Firestorm then becomes the Universal Fire Elemental, which amounts almost to an ascension to godhood, and leaves Earth behind entirely for cosmic parts unknown.

Bereft of his nuclear powers, the earthbound Raymond retains enough of his superheroic good looks to garner some success as a male model. Unfortunately, Raymond also develops a drinking problem (a result of the years of stress that Firestorm had inflicted upon Raymond and his family, and a common plight of heroes' alter egos) and discovers that his days of nuclear derring-do have left him with a nasty surprise—a rare type of leukemia, echoing Stein's earlier brain tumor. Raymond's illness forces him to seek the help of his old Justice League associates (*Extreme Justice* #1, 1995), which leads to the discovery that Firestorm's powers still lay dormant within his cells. Stein eventually returns to Earth, using his fire elemental powers to reignite Raymond's slumbering abilities, thereby eliminating his cancer and allowing Raymond to return to superheroics (and Justice League reserve status) in Firestorm's original form (appearing more or less as he did in his 1978 debut, while Stein returns to space as a fire elemental). Raymond's alcoholism remains a persistent problem, however, giving the nuclear-powered hero an enduring human dimension. Another difficulty he faces is learning how to use his powers without access to Stein's scientific expertise. To make up for this lack, Raymond calls on superhero colleagues such as Oracle for advice (*JLA* #40, 2000), and enrolls as a physics student at Ivy University, where he is tutored in the mysteries of nuclear science by Ray Palmer, who leads a double life as the Atom (*Day of Judgment* miniseries, 1999).

A new *Firestorm* comics series debuted in 2004, but this time Firestorm was an African American teenager named Jason Rusch. The Ronnie Raymond version of Firestorm was killed in the *Identity Crisis* miniseries (2004). His consciousness briefly became part of Jason Rusch's new Firestorm but then seemingly faded away. At the end of the *Blackest Night* series (2009–2010), the Ronnie Raymond version of Firestorm was resurrected. However, in the series *Brightest Day* (2010–2011), Martin Stein was killed.

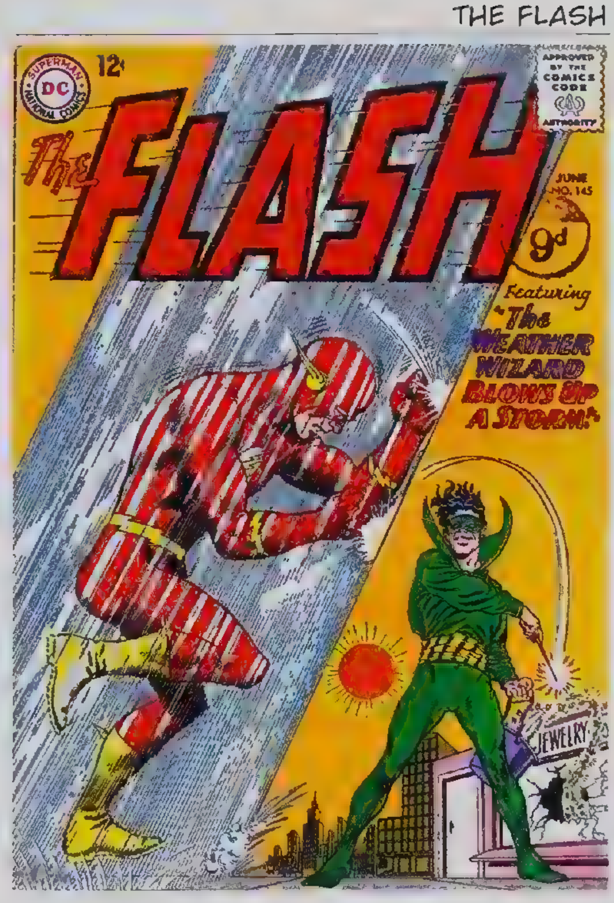
A new *Firestorm* comic book series was launched in September 2011, co-authored by Ethan Van Sciver and Gail Simone, drawn by Yildiray Cinar, and starring both Ronnie Raymond (again depicted as a high school student) and Jason Rusch as Firestorm. The animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* presented its own version of Firestorm, who was created through the fusion of African American high school student Jason Rusch and his coach, a very different version of Ronnie Raymond. This time Jason is the dominant side of Firestorm, who looks African American, and Raymond is the "voice" in the head of Firestorm, like Stein was in the original comics version. *—MAM & PS*

The Flash

In an industry characterized by almost constant change, it is reassuring that the Flash has stayed true to his comics roots, even through his three different incarnations. The first version of the character was as DC Comics' fifth superhero (tying with Hawkman for the honor) and as the first super-speedster in comics history—though of course Superman was also rather quick on his feet. The Flash's origin in *Flash Comics* #1 (January 1940) recounts how student Jay Garrick is experimenting one night in the lab at Midwestern University when he is overcome by "hard water fumes" and passes out. Reawakening weeks later, he finds that he can move incredibly fast and is even able to pluck a bullet out of the air. ("Swifter than the speed of light itself—faster than a bolt of lightning in the sky—is the Flash!) In an unusual display of self-aggrandizement, his first action is to play on the college football team, single-handedly winning the game and impressing the socks off his girlfriend, Joan Williams.

The strip's creator, writer Gardner Fox, was inspired by Mercury, the Roman god of speed, and the Flash shared Mercury's winged helmet and boots, combined with a red shirt and blue slacks ensemble, topped off with a lightning-bolt insignia on his chest. For its first few years, the strip was rather lighthearted in tone, reflected in the cartoony art of Harry Lampert (who co-created the character) and Everett E. Hibbard, and in adventures that pitted America's beloved hero against witches and fairies. He also acquired some bumbling assistants—the Three Stooges-inspired Winky, Blinky, and Noddy—who eventually got their own strip in *All-American Comics.*

After World War II, the Flash's more comedic elements were downplayed by new editor Julius Schwartz who, along with writers John Broome and Robert Kanigher, introduced a colorful lineup of supervillains into the strip. These included the Ragdoll, the Thinker, Star Sapphire, the Fiddler, and the flirtatious Thorn (who was deemed too suggestive by DC's management and promptly banished from the feature). Visually, the introduction of dynamic young artists Carmine Infantino and Joe Kubert ensured that the strip was one of the most attractive of the Golden Age (1938–1954). The powerful simplicity of the Flash's powers—What kid wouldn't want to be the fastest runner in his school, for instance?—made him one of DC's top sellers. In addition to *Flash Comics,* he was also featured in *All-Flash Comics, Comic Cavalcade,* and as a member of the Justice Society in *All Star Comics,* making almost 200 appearances altogether. Only Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman made more appearances than the Scarlet Speedster, as he was nicknamed.


Superman DC National Comics
12¢
Approved by the Comics Code Authority
The FLASH
June No. 145
9d
Featuring "The Weather Wizard Blows Up a Storm!"
JEWELRY

The Flash #145 © 1964 DC Comics. (Cover art by Carmine Infantino and Murphy Anderson.)

Jay Garrick's last Golden Age adventure was in *All Star Comics* #57 in 1951, but a little more than five years later a new Flash hit the newsstands in what was to be one of the pivotal moments in comics history. *Showcase* #4 (September–October 1956) introduced police scientist Barry Allen, who suddenly acquired super-speed powers when a lightning bolt hit his chemical cabinet, drenching him with a cocktail of chemicals. Inspired by an old copy of *Flash Comics,* Allen made himself a red, rubberized costume that could compress itself into a chamber in his ring, and suddenly a new Flash was born. Like Spider-Man's alter ego Peter Parker (still to come), Allen exemplified the irony of real life outside of a costume: As the Fastest Man Alive, he could run faster than the speed of light, but as Barry Allen he could never show up for a date on time. After the postwar collapse of the genre, there had been the occasional attempt to revive the superhero concept, but the Flash was the first revival that actually *worked*, and its success single-handedly inspired the Silver Age comics boom (1956–1969).

The team behind the new Flash included the same people who had worked on him before, namely Schwartz, Kanigher, Broome, and Infantino; all had matured and improved, especially artist Infantino, who brought a sleek sophistication to the strip. After four issues of *Showcase*, the Flash was given his own comic in 1959, resuming numbering at #105, the point at which the previous *Flash Comics* had been canceled. Both Flash alter egos, Barry Allen and Jay Garrick, shared several common features: they were both scientists, both had girlfriends who knew their secret identities (though Barry kept his girlfriend Iris West guessing for several years), and both were laid back, mature, almost fatherly figures. As before, the new Flash strip cleverly sustained the lighthearted tone of its stories, mixing humor with adventure in a way that was quite unique for the time.

Again like the Golden Age Flash, the new series featured villains by the score, more so in fact than just about any other superhero comic. Over three decades, the Flash pitted his wits and his fists against his rogues' gallery, including the Mirror Master, Super-Gorilla Grodd, Professor Zoom, the Pied Piper, the Weather Wizard, the Top, Captain Boomerang, Abra Kadabra, the Trickster, Captain Cold, and Heat-Wave. In fact, where most stories embraced "relevance" in the 1970s, or became dark and violent in the 1980s, the Flash remained, for the most part, the same. Similarly, he had a remarkably stable creative team: Infantino drew the series until 1968 and then returned in the early 1980s, while Irv Novick drew most of the other issues; Broome and Kanigher were replaced by Cary Bates, who then wrote the comic for more than ten years.

While Barry Allen and Iris West never actually had any children in the book's original run (they were married in 1966), the series nevertheless acquired its own family of sorts. The first arrival was Wally West, Iris' kid brother, who was awarded his own superspeed powers in *Flash* #110, in a repeat of the original accident while he was visiting Barry in his lab. He thus became Kid Flash and accompanied the Flash on numerous adventures, before later going on to join the Teen Titans. Ralph Dibny, the Elongated Man, introduced himself two issues later and teamed up with the Flash on many occasions, as did the Green Lantern, and a long-lost friend: Jay Garrick, the original Flash. Garrick re-entered the comics world in *Flash* #123, ten years after his last appearance in print. The popularity of that issue led to the gradual reintroduction of many other Golden Age heroes, including the Justice Society of America. From 1976 on, Garrick has been a stalwart of numerous Justice Society comics and crossovers, and remains a treasured star of the DC universe—which is more than can be said for Barry Allen.

John Wesley Shipp in the title role of the television version of *The Flash*. (Warner Bros. TV/King Features / The Kobal Collection.)

The 1970s were a hard time for a lot of DC's Silver Age warriors, and although the Flash weathered the storm, as the years went by his world began to crumble away. First, his beloved Iris was murdered by Professor Zoom, who in turn was later killed by the Flash, leading to years on the run and a tumultuous court case. (Professor Zoom has since returned alive, of course.) In 1985, his comic was canceled (with issue #350) and finally, in the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* miniseries, poor old Barry died trying to save the planet. At this point, DC decided to let the sidekick take over—to date the only time this has happened—and in 1987, Wally West, Kid Flash, became the one and only Flash.

West was a different, edgier, and more youthful Flash; he shared none of his mentor's modesty and reticence. He was brash, bold, and somewhat self-centered—the perfect hero for the 1980s. West was not as quick as Allen and needed to consume vast quantities of food to keep going, but luckily money was not a problem, since he had won the lottery. While initially trying to steer things away from the old Flash, the comic's various writers, including William Messner-Loebs and Mark Waid, soon found themselves bringing back the old villains one by one, proving that what worked in the 1960s could work just as well in the 1990s.

The new decade also brought with it an entirely unexpected development: *The Flash* television show that ran for twenty-two episodes on CBS in the 1990–1991 season. John Wesley Shipp made a charismatic Flash, and Amanda Pays, who portrayed Dr. Christina McGee, a convincing pseudo love interest who knew about the Flash's secret identity. David Cassidy played the Mirror Master and Mark Hamill portrayed the Trickster. With story editors from the comics industry (Howard Chaykin and John Francis Moore), a budget of $1 million for each hour-long episode, and unprecedented special-effects techniques, *The Flash* redefined the way that superheroes had previously been portrayed on television. Critics cite the poor time slot (opposite NBC's *The Cosby Show* and Fox's *The Simpsons*) as the reason for the show's brief lifespan.

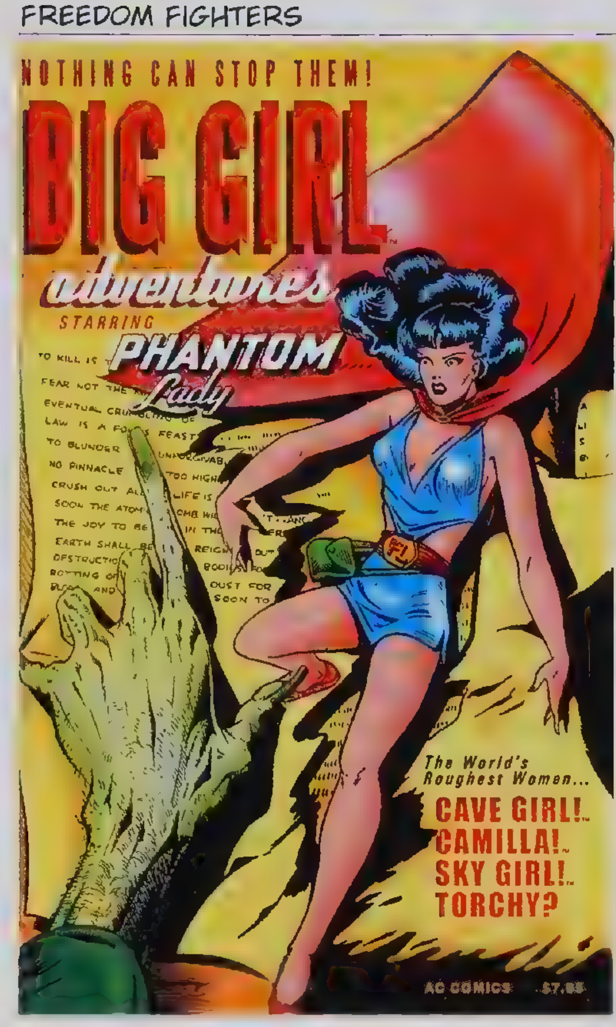
Today's Wally West has surrounded himself with his own cast of thousands, including interdimensional pal Chunk and Korean-American journalist (and future wife) Linda. For the most part, however, his companions are fellow speedsters, such as Johnny Quick, Jesse Quick, Jon Fox (the Flash of the twenty-seventh century) and the "Zen master of speed," Max Mercury (formerly the Golden Age hero Quicksilver). The most significant hanger-on has proved to be Impulse (introduced in *Flash* vol. 2 #92), a hyperactive speed demon from the thirtieth century, sent back in time to counteract a fatal super-aging disease and to learn how to "chill out," with the help of Max Mercury.

The hyperkinetic Impulse struck a chord with fans and was soon granted his own comic (1995–2002) and a starring role in the Young Justice group (1998–2003), though perhaps his enduring legacy will be as one of the first major DC characters drawn in a Manga-inspired style. Barry Allen, the Silver Age Flash, finally returned to life in *Final Crisis* #2 (August 2008) and then starred in the miniseries *The Flash: Rebirth* (2009), written by Geoff Johns and drawn by Ethan Van Sciver. Barry Allen then starred in a new *The Flash* comic that began in 2010, and was a principal character in DC Comics' 2011 event miniseries *Flashpoint*. Yet another new *The Flash* comics series starring Barry Allen in the title role was launched in September 2011, with Francis Manapul and Brian Buccellato collaborating on both writing and art.

The Wally West version of the Flash appeared in an episode of *Superman: The Animated Series* and was a regular cast member, voiced by Michael Rosenbaum, in both the *Justice League* and *Justice League Unlimited* animated TV series. Jay Garrick as the Golden Age Flash, Barry Allen as the Silver Age Flash, and Wally West as Kid Flash all appear in the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. *—DAR & PS*

Freedom Fighters

The Freedom Fighters are a patriotically-themed team of superheroes, whose members were originally owned by Quality Comics in the 1940s and were subsequently acquired by DC Comics. When the team first appeared in comics, its members were Uncle Sam, the Black


NOTHING CAN STOP THEM!
BIG GIRL adventures
STARRING PHANTOM Lady
The World's Roughest Women...
CAVE GIRL!.. CAMILLA!.. SKY GIRL!.. TORCHY?
AC COMICS $7.95

Big Girl Adventures #1 © 2002 AC Comics. (Cover art by Matt Baker.)

Condor, Doll Man, the Human Bomb, Phantom Lady, and the Ray.

Their leader is Uncle Sam, who appropriately debuted in *National Comics* #1 (July 1940), and was created by writer/artist Will Eisner, based on the iconic American figure best known through the portrait by James Montgomery Flagg. Eisner's version was a Revolutionary War soldier named Sam, who continues to manifest himself in physical form as the embodiment of the spirit of American freedom.

Created by Eisner and artist Lou Fine, the Black Condor first appeared in *Crack Comics* #1 (May 1940). Raised as a child by intelligent condors (South American birds of prey), Richard Grey, Jr. gained the ability to fly. Assuming the identity of the murdered U. S. Senator Thomas Wright, Grey became the crime fighting Black Condor.

Also created by Eisner, Darrell Dane, alias Doll Man, was the first superhero who could shrink in size, debuting in *Feature Comics* #27 (December 1939). He concocted a formula that allowed him to shrink to six inches in height while retaining his full strength, like DC's later hero, the Atom.

Roy Lincoln, the Human Bomb, drank a chemical that enabled him to cause powerful explosions with his touch. As a result he had to wear a protective gloves. Created by writer/artist Paul Gustavson, he first appeared in *Police Comics* #1 (August 1941).

Also making her debut in *Police Comics* #1 was the Phantom Lady, one of the first superheroines, who was first drawn by Arthur Peddy at the Eisner-Iger studio. She was Sandra Knight, the daughter of a United States Senator, who in her costumed identity utilized a "black light" projector, with which she could make herself invisible. After her run at Quality, Fox Feature Syndicate published new *Phantom Lady* comics, which became notorious because of the daringly revealing costume that "good girl artist" Matt Baker gave the character. Other lesser comics companies published *Phantom Lady* stories until DC asserted ownership of the character.

Reporter "Happy" Terrill traveled in a balloon through an electrical storm, gaining the powers to absorb and project light and to fly, and became the costumed hero known as the Ray. Created by Eisner and Fine, the Ray debuted in *Smash Comics* #14 (September 1940).

Writer Len Wein and artist Dick Dillin reintroduced these six Quality heroes in DC's *Justice League of America* #107 (October 1973) as the Freedom Fighters, a resistance group on a parallel world, Earth-X, where Nazi Germany had won World War II. They earned their own *Freedom Fighters* comic book series, set on DC's main Earth, whose first issue was cover-dated April 1976.

Other Quality heroes who were later part of the Freedom Fighters included Firebrand (Rod Reilly, from *Police Comics* #1), Miss America (Joan Dale, who can transmute matter, from *Military Comics*, August 1941), Alias the Spider (Thomas Hallaway, an archer, from *Crack Comics* #1), the Jester (Chuck Lane, from *Smash Comics* #22, May 1941), Manhunter (Dan Richards, from *Police Comics* #8, March 1942, not to be confused with

DC's Simon & Kirby version), and Quicksilver (now known as Max Mercury, a super-speedster from *National Comics* #5, November 1940). Quality's Miss America and Quicksilver are different from the Marvel heroes of the same names.

Over the decades DC has introduced new versions of various members of the Freedom Fighters. For example, writer Roy Thomas co-created a female Firebrand in *All-Star Squadron*, and Ray Terrill, son of Happy, starred in his own *The Ray* comic book (1994–1996).

The 2006 miniseries, *Uncle Sam and the Freedom Fighters*, featured new versions of Doll Man, Human Bomb, Phantom Lady, and the Ray, led by the original Uncle Sam. A new, continuing *Freedom Fighters* series, featuring this new team, was launched in 2010.

The original line-up of Freedom Fighters made their television debut when they teamed up with Batman and Plastic Man in a 2010 episode of the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. —*PS*

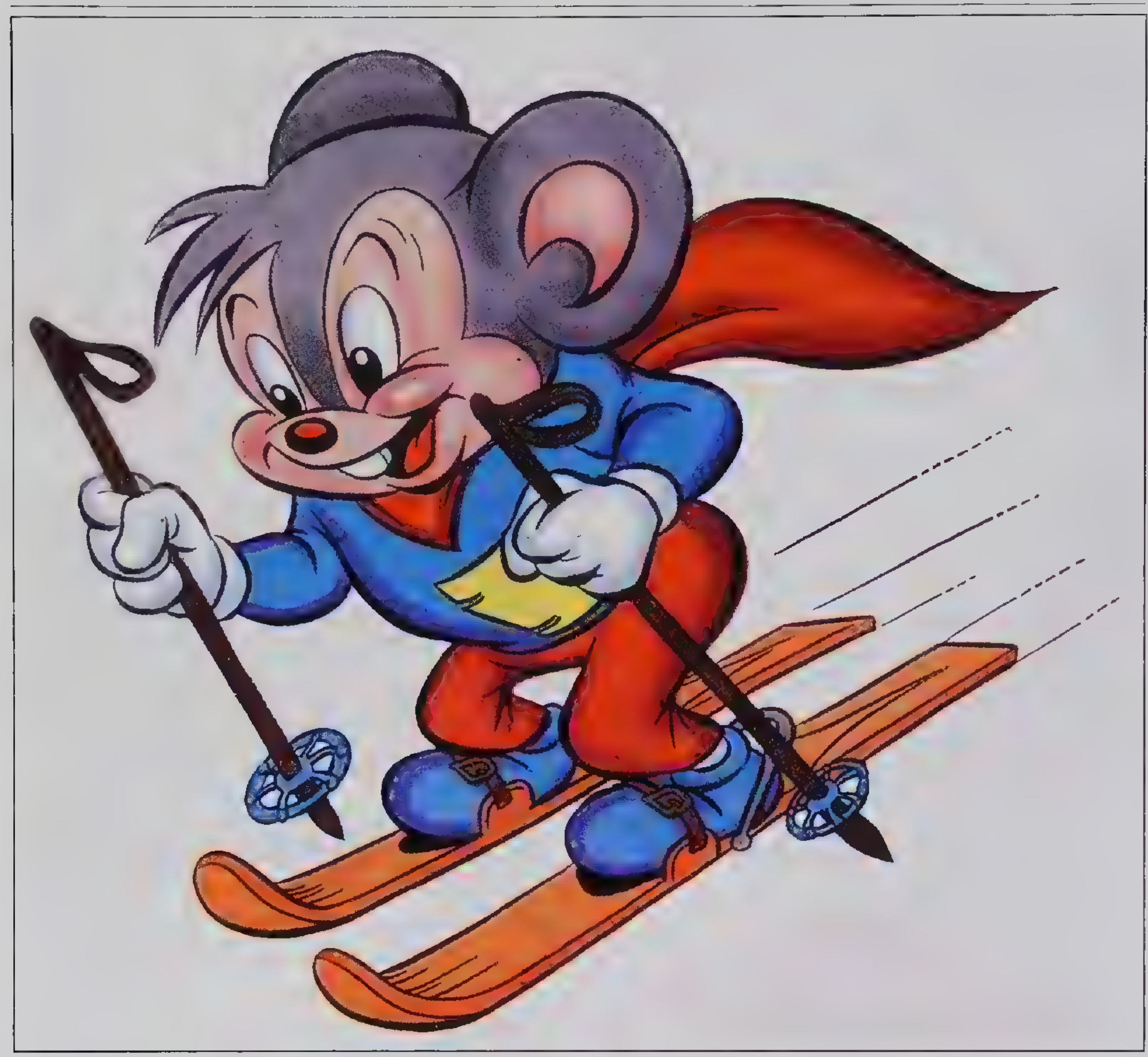
Funny Animal Heroes

It's a dog-eat-cat world in the land of animated cartoons. Endangered by falling anvils and ubiquitous dynamite, as well as ravenous, predatory toons loony for a meal of a weaker species, anthropomorphic animals need their superheroes, too.

The first big cheese was Mighty Mouse, originating as "Super Mouse" in the theatrical short *The Mouse of Tomorrow* (1942). If Terrytoons animator "Izzy" Klein had his way, this diminutive dynamo would have been "Super Fly." Head honcho Paul Terry, seeing dollar signs in a merger of Mickey Mouse and Superman, appropriated and altered Klein's idea, little realizing that Standard Comics had just beaten him to the punch with its own Supermouse (whose comics ran until 1958), leading Terry to change his character's name. Bursting into action by singing an operatic strain of "Here I Come to Save the Day," Mighty Mouse rescued his sweetie Pearl Pureheart, or other random rodents, from the clutches of a cagey cat named Oil Can Harry, through decades of cartoons and comic books published by St. Johns, Pines, Dell, and Gold Key Comics. He was a staple of Saturday morning television for many years, including CBS's *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*, Ralph Bakshi's subversive 1987 interpretation, peppered with double-entendres that flew over the heads of children—but not their parents. Watchdog groups incensed over a flower-sniffing sequence that allegedly mimicked cocaine use lobbied Bakshi's *Mouse* off the air.

Hoppy the Marvel Bunny, a Bugs Bunny/Captain Marvel amalgamation, bounced into Fawcett Comics in 1942. Two different Super Rabbits premiered in 1943: the first, an original character published by Marvel Comics, and the second, a Superman parody in a classic Bugs Bunny short. DC Comics' McSnurtle the Turtle, the slow-as molasses alter ego of the Terrific Whatzit, a funny-animal version of DC's own speedster the Flash, bowed in 1944. One of the original Captain Marvel's best friends is Mr. Tawky Tawny, a talking tiger, while one of his greatest enemies is the diabolical Mr. Mind, a tiny genius worm from outer space. From the ashes of the post–World War II atomic age rose Charlton Comics' Atomic Mouse in 1953, joined by spin-offs Atom the Cat and Atomic Rabbit. Cartoonist Henry Boltinoff's Super Turtle, a half-page humor strip, appeared in the 1950s and 1960s as filler in many of DC's titles.

Funny-animal heroes arrived on the budding medium of television in 1948 in the form of *Crusader Rabbit*. This low budget series starred a clever bunny hero and his lumbering, dim-bulb buddy Rags the Tiger in narrated comical capers with cliff-hanger endings. Sound familiar? Co-creator Jay Ward later recycled this concept with Rocky and Bullwinkle. In the 1960s, the boob tube became a super zoo: Quick Draw McGraw paraded about as the Zorro parody El Kabong, and Bob Kane, the father of Batman, came up with a funny animal version of his own creation with *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse*. "Humble and loveable" Shoeshine Boy popped power pills to change into *Underdog* (1964), who was voiced by Wally Cox, and spent his series rescuing the



Super Mouse from *Super Mouse* #14 © 1951 Standard Comics.

demure Polly Purebread; Hyram Fly slipped on his "supersonic glasses" to become lightning-fast hero Fearless Fly on the *Milton the Monster Show* (1965); Hanna-Barbera's invincible insect *Atom Ant* debuted in 1965; *Batfink* (1966) featured a steel-winged rodent with a sidekick named Karate; and Ward's wacky *George of the Jungle* featured Super Chicken (1967), whose powers came from guzzling a concoction called "Super Sauce." More toon titans would follow, including Hanna-Barbera's *Hong Kong Phooey* (1974) and *Dyno-Mutt* (1976); *Danger Mouse*, (1981) from the United Kingdom; and Disney's *Darkwing Duck* (1991). Daffy Duck briefly took on the role of the DC Comics superhero Green Lantern in a 2003 episode of the animated TV series *Duck Dodgers*.

A new crop of caped critters continued to fill comic book pages through the latter twentieth century. Underground comics artist Gilbert Shelton created Wonder Warthog in 1962, and in 1965 Disney's Goofy donned a blue cape and red long johns as Super Goof, a stint that lasted almost twenty years. Howard the Duck became "trapped in a world he never made" (the Marvel Comics universe) in 1973, enjoying several years of popularity—and a 1976 bid for the U.S. presidency!— before becoming mired in the oil slick of George Lucas' 1986 live-action film adaptation. (To avenge an earlier indignity, Howard creator Steve Gerber teamed with comics art legend Jack Kirby for *Destroyer Duck* [1982–1984], a farcical allegory of—and fundraiser for—Gerber's court battle to retain ownership of Howard.)

Writer/artist Joshua Quagmire introduced Cutey Bunny, the world's first African American rabbit superheroine, in 1982. DC's *Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew,* a funny-animal superteam, created by Roy Thomas and Scott Shaw, launched in 1982, and Marvel's porcine version of Spider-Man—Peter Porker, the Spectacular Spider-Ham—wallowed into comics in 1983. Stan Sakai's samurai "rabbit bodyguard," Usagi Yojimbo, got his start in 1985, and occasionally appears today. One of the denizens of *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* is Looney Leo, a talking lion cartoon character who was brought to life, and who was once the sidekick of the superhero known as the Gentleman.

But no funny-animal heroes in recent memory have scored a larger success than the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Premiering in 1984 as a black-and-white comic, these "Heroes in a Half Shell" quickly blasted into a mega-media empire, including television animation, a live-action movie franchise, and a line of action figures. After a period of dormancy, the Turtles returned to the TV screen and toy shelves in 2003.

Although he's not a comedy character, Rocket Raccoon is indeed a talking animal, and also a superhero who has adventures in outer space. Created by Bill Mantlo and Keith Giffen, Rocket Raccoon debuted in *Marvel Preview* #7 (Summer 1976). Recently Rocket Raccoon joined Marvel's new Guardians of the Galaxy team.

The title character of the 2008 Disney computer-animated movie *Bolt* is a dog who stars on a television series as a heroic, superpowered pet. Bolt (voiced by John Travolta) believes he actually has superpowers, until he is accidentally shipped from Hollywood to New York City. Far from the studio, Bolt comes to realize the truth as he travels cross-country to return to his beloved co-star, a girl named Penny. Ultimately Bolt proves himself to be a true hero by saving Penny from a studio fire. *—ME & PS*

Gen 13

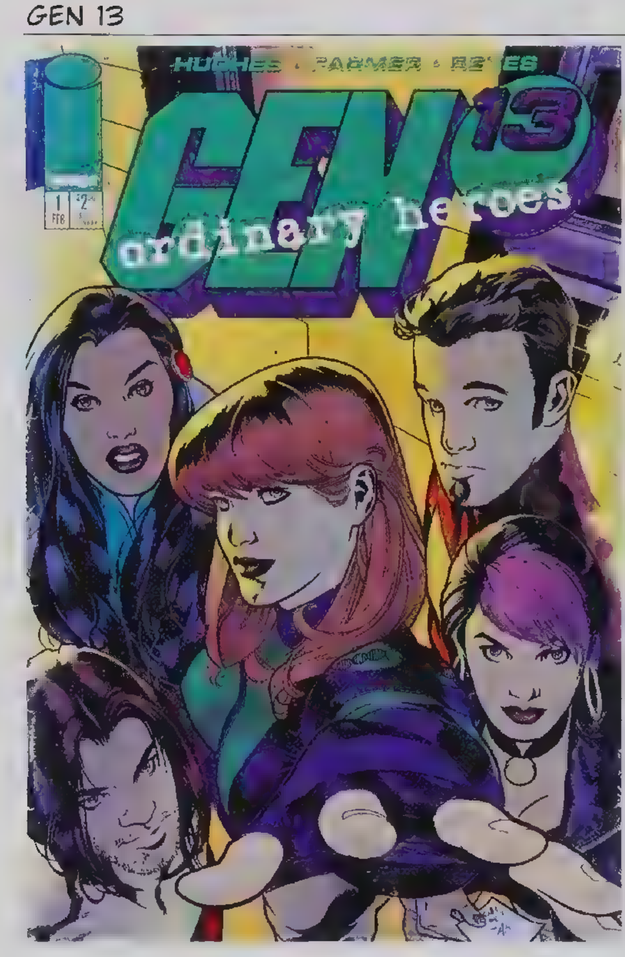
Often seen as the slacker heroes of the WildStorm universe, Gen 13 are a group of teenage superheroes who have Gen-Active powers. Created in the Project Genesis program, a part of the secret government group known as International Operations (I.O.), the teens escape an uncertain future to live as a surrogate family for each other, all while fighting aliens and criminals such as Ivana, the Keepers, Bliss, and Threshold. The Gen 13 team is mentored by an ex-operative for the government, John Lynch, a man with mysterious powers and a shady past. The team lives at his La Jolla, California, home, where he has an android maid named Anna. Eventually, Lynch is revealed as team member Burnout's father. Others in the group include Fairchild, Rainmaker, Freefall, and Grunge.

Fairchild is Caitlin Fairchild, a very tall college student who developed superstrength and an extremely dense body while at Project Genesis. After she helped the others escape, Fairchild became the *de facto* leader of the group. The Amazon-like Fairchild is rarely able to stay dressed, as her clothes are constantly being shredded, vaporized, or otherwise destroyed.

Burnout is Bobby Lane, a sullen high-schooler who is inducted into Project Genesis, gaining the power to generate heat and plasma fire blasts, and to fly. Sarah Rainmaker uses her last name as her code name, and is an Apache who first discovered her powers while on the San Carlos Reservation. Rainmaker is able to fly and control the weather, and uses ampli-bands on her forearms to direct lightning strikes at her opponents. She is openly bisexual.

Freefall is Roxanne Spaulding, a girl who tries to cultivate a "bad girl" image, and who is romantically linked with Grunge. She has the power to levitate herself or almost any mass, thus negating gravity. Grunge is Percival Edmund "Eddy" Chang, a muscular, immature youngster with a taste for skateboards, surfing, pizza, tattoos, and women. Stronger than average humans, he also has the ability to assimilate properties from anything he touches—steel, water, concrete—and become a living version of that property. He is sometimes able to transform into other people as well, has a photographic memory, and knows multiple forms of the martial arts. His roving eye for romance doesn't sit well with Freefall.

Fairchild, Burnout, and Freefall first appeared in *Deathmate* #2 (a.k.a. *Deathmate Black*, September 1993), an inter-company crossover between Image Comics and Valiant Comics. Rainmaker appeared in *Stormwatch* #8 (1994), while Grunge made his debut in *Gen 13* #1 (February 1994), the first of a five-issue miniseries from Image imprint WildStorm. Drawn by fan favorites J. Scott Campbell and Jim Lee, and written by Brandon Choi, *Gen 13* was given a



Gen13: Ordinary Heroes #1 © 1996 Jim Lee/WildStorm Productions. (Cover art by Adam Hughes.)

regular series starting in March 1995, and a second series, *Gen 13 Bootleg,* ran twenty issues (plus an annual) from November 1996 to July 1998. The series were very popular not only because of the kinetic art and humorous stories, but also because the book was laden with cheesecake and beefcake; the hormones of the characters rivaled any soap opera stud or vixen, and thongs and shorts seemed acceptable crime-fighting apparel.

In addition to the two regular *Gen 13* series, there were almost twenty one-shot issues and almost as many miniseries. *Gen 13* became one of the hottest properties for WildStorm, leading to crossover stories with *Fantastic Four* and *Generation X* (Marvel), *Monkeyman & O'Brien* (Dark Horse), *Superman* (DC), and *The Maxx* (Image). A planned and partially completed crossover with *Batman* (DC) never appeared. Spin-offs such as *Gen 12* and *Gen-Active* also appeared. Besides spin-offs, *Gen 13* was infamous not just for its cheesecake covers, but also for its alternate ones; issue #1 of the second series would have fifteen different covers total, and it wasn't rare for other issues to have at last one alternate cover and sometimes more.

When WildStorm Studios was bought by DC Comics in 1999, *Gen 13* moved under the DC/WildStorm publishing umbrella with issue #37 (1999). The popularity of the series began to wane—critics often blamed overexposure—and *Gen 13* was finally canceled with issue #77 (July 2002). In that final issue, it appeared that the original teen heroes were dead.

Gen 13 was relaunched with issue #0 (September 2002), written by past *X-Men* author Chris Claremont. Several new multicultural teens showed up to fight evil—Dylan York, Ethan York, Gwen Matsura, Ja'nelle Moorhead, Hamza Rashad—with some of them having gotten their Gen-Active powers from the mysterious Herod. The new team faced villains such as the Triad, Purple Haze, Chrome, and G-Nome. Predictably, Caitlin Fairchild returned, signaling the eventual return of her other previous teammates. By the time the series ended (again), the original *Gen 13* team was reinstated. The final issue for this run was #16 (February 2004). The series was rebooted in 2006, revising the origins of the team's characters.

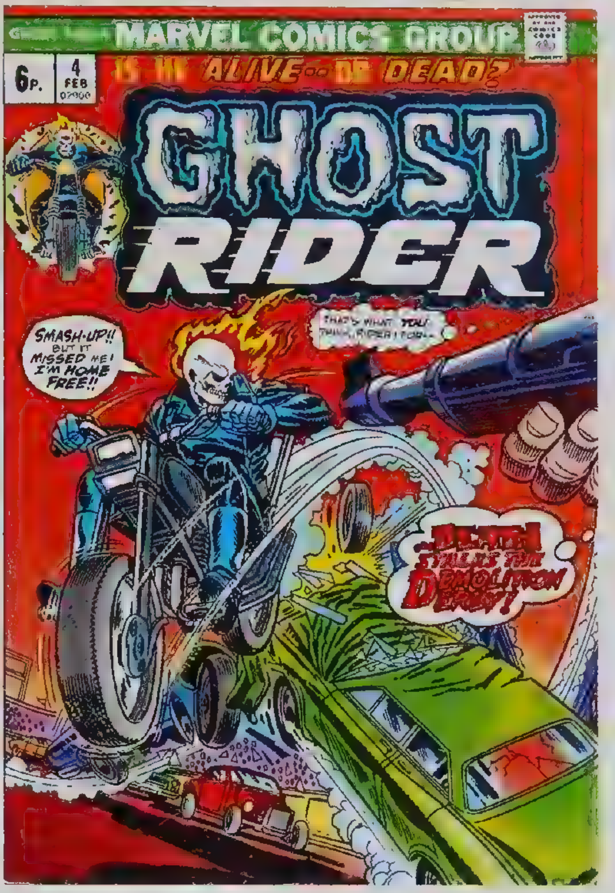
Over the years, assorted Gen 13 action figures and models have been released, as well as three novels. In 1998, an eighty-minute *Gen 13* animated feature film was written and directed by Kevin Altieri. An all-star cast recorded voices, including Alicia Witt (Fairchild), John de Lancie (Colonel Lynch), Elizabeth Daily (Freefall), musician Flea (Grunge), Mark Hamill (Threshold), and Cloris Leachman (Helga). The PG-13-rated film was never released in the United States by Hollywood Pictures (an arm of Disney), though it was shown at some comic book conventions, and released direct-to-video in England, Australia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Brazil, and other countries. A live-action *Gen 13* film, slated to be produced by Courtney Solomon, went through several script drafts before being mothballed at Disney. *—AM*

Ghost Rider

After the enormous superhero boom of the 1960s, the following decade was characterized by a big upswing in horror comics. Marvel Comics responded to this demand with a major line of horror stories, adopting the same sort of continuity and characterization that had made their superhero stories so successful. Only rarely, however, did they combine the two genres to create horror superheroes; the Son of Satan was, despite his name, a genuine hero. However, it was the Ghost Rider who would prove to be by far the most popular of this type of specialty character.

The first Ghost Rider was a macabre Western lawman, inspired by the hit Vaughn Monroe song, "Ghost Riders in the Sky." He was co-created by writer Ray Krank and artist Dick Ayers in Magazine Enterprises' *Tim Holt* #11 (1949). After the trademark expired, writers Roy Thomas and Gary Friedrich, and artist Dick Ayers, created a Marvel version of this character in *Ghost Rider* #1 (February 1967). This original Ghost Rider was a nineteenth century teacher Carter Slade, who disguised himself in a phosphorescent costume that made him look like a ghost when he fought lawbreakers. This series was not a great success. Somehow, however, the name "Ghost Rider" still hung around.

Marvel editor in chief Roy Thomas, writer Gary Friedrich, and artist Mike Ploog introduced the new motorcycle-riding Ghost Rider in *Marvel Spotlight* #5 (August 1972). (Friedrich, Ploog and Thomas have publicly disputed over who should be credited as this character's creator.) With his sleek, blue leather costume, custom built chopper, and blazing skull for a head, he was one of the most visually arresting characters in comics—though Ploog apparently only signed up for the project thinking that it was going to be a Western strip!


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
6p.
4 FEB 02900
IS HE ALIVE--OR DEAD?
GHOST RIDER
SMASH-UP!! BUT IT MISSED ME! I'M HOME FREE!!
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, RIDER! FOR...
...DEATH STALKS THE DEMOLITION DERBY!

Ghost Rider #4 © 1974 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Gil Kane and Frank Giacoia.)

The new Ghost Rider was Johnny Blaze, who had been raised since the death of his father by Crash Simpson, a daredevil stunt rider in the circus (as Blaze's father had been). Over the years, Blaze, too, learned to be an expert motorcyclist, but his life changed when he found out that Crash was dying of an incurable disease. Naturally, this being the 1970s, Blaze sold his soul to the devil, though at the last minute his half-sister stepped in and at least partially prevented the spell from working. The result was that, as night fell, Johnny Blaze became a living skeleton, possessed with the power of hellfire, which he used to battle evil, faced with the dread prospect that he could go over to the dark side at any time.

Soon, leaving the circus behind, he moved to Hollywood and briefly spent time (with former members of the X-Men) in a superhero team called the Champions, before hitting the road as a drifter. Along with most of Marvel's horror stars, Ghost Rider fought all types of B-grade villains, including his nemesis the Orb, a motorcycling goon who wore a giant eyeball helmet. After a short run in *Marvel Spotlight,* the Rider was given his own title in 1973, but by then Ploog had left. By most measures, Ghost Rider was rarely one of Marvel's better-crafted comics, but somehow it outlasted

Ghost Rider was adapted to film in 2007. (Columbia/Marvel Entertprises / Tne Kobal Collection.)

all the other horror books to run for an incredible ten years. If nothing else, it showed the potency of the horror/superhero/easy rider hybrid and just how far you can go with a character of truly startling appearance.

As the 1980s turned away from horror, Johnny Blaze more or less vanished from sight. Then, out of the blue in 1990, a new Ghost Rider comic appeared with a new star. This incarnation was teenager Danny Ketch, who happened upon the Ghost Rider's motorcycle in a graveyard and was transformed into another flaming-skulled hero. Much as before, this Rider was soon enjoying enormous popularity and quickly became very much one of the hot characters of the 1990s. The combination of crunching action and the ultimate in teenage alienation (forget acne, imagine how you would feel if you suddenly became a fiery skeleton!) clearly struck a chord with fans.

It was not long before Johnny Blaze himself returned, this time simply called Blaze, and soon both he and Ketch were co-headlining in a second Ghost Rider comic called *Spirits of Vengeance*. That was followed by another spin-off, *Ghost Rider 2099*, which starred a futuristic, computer-enhanced version of the hero, potently mixing science fiction and horror. For a while, Ketch and his fellow bikers were everywhere—in spin-offs and one-shots, and guest-starring with classic superheroes such as Captain America, Wolverine, and the Punisher. Sometimes, however, you can have too much of a good thing, and this overexposure disheartened fans and eventually led to the comic's cancellation in 1998.

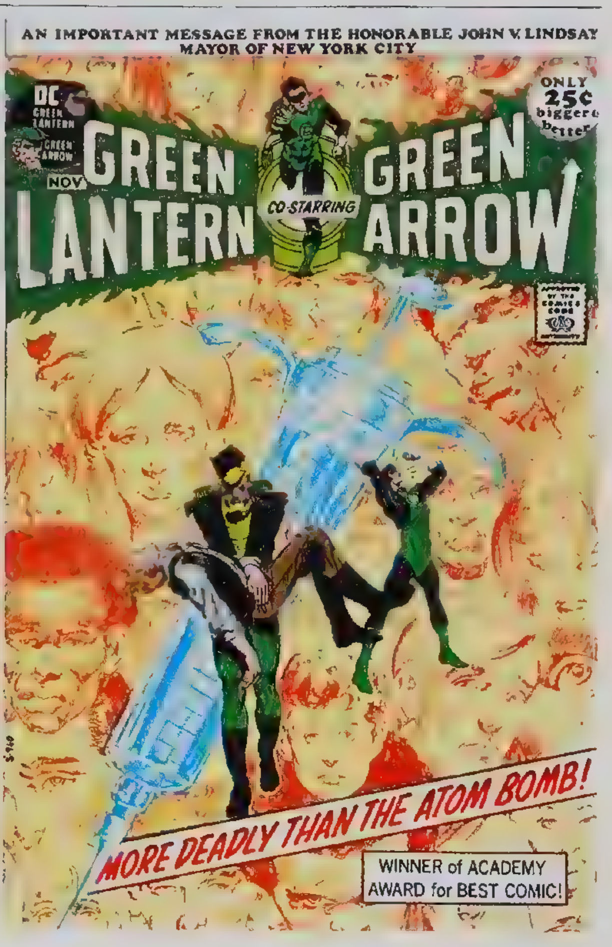
John Blaze returned to the role of Ghost Rider in the Marvel Knights imprint's *Ghost Rider* limited series, published in 2001. Blaze then starred as Ghost Rider in another Marvel Knights miniseries in 2005 and a monthly series that ran from 2006 to 2009. Danny Ketch has also continued to appear in comics as the Ghost Rider, often interacting with his brother. Marvel introduced a new female Ghost Rider in the *Ghost Rider* comics series that debuted in June 2011, also starring Johnny Blaze, written by Rob Williams and drawn by Matthew Clark.

Marvel's original Western version of the Ghost Rider is now known as the Phantom Rider. After Carter Slade's demise, his brother Lincoln became the new Phantom Rider, but went mad and died. Lincoln's descendant Hamilton Slade, became a modern Phantom Rider and was a member of a Western superhero team called the Rangers. Lincoln's spirit took possession of Hamilton's daughter, Jaime, turning her into a female Phantom Rider. Hamilton successfully exorcised Lincoln's spirit, but was then murdered, leaving Jaime as the present day Phantom Rider.

Nicolas Cage plays Johnny Blaze in the 2007 *Ghost Rider* live action movie, written and directed by Mark Steven Johnson and released by Columbia Pictures. Cage returns as Blaze in the sequel, *Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance,* directed by Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor (Columbia, 2012). *—DAR & PS*

Green Arrow

From the very earliest days of superheroes, there have been "super-archers." While DC Comics' Green Arrow was not the first, he was certainly the longest-lived. Created by writer Mort Weisinger and artist George Papp, the Green Arrow first appeared in 1941 in *More Fun Comics* #73, and was from the start a transparent attempt to replicate one of the company's biggest successes. Like Batman, Green Arrow had a wealthy playboy alter ego (Oliver Queen), a plucky kid sidekick called Speedy (Queen's ward, Roy Harper), a secret underground workshop beneath his estate, and his own Arrow car, Arrow plane, and Arrow boats. Where Batman had his seemingly limitless utility belt, Green Arrow had an almost inexhaustible supply of gimmicky arrows, including boxing glove, tripwire, lariat, jet, tightrope, and acetylene types. His origin, however, was different from other superheroes and very straightforward: After being shipwrecked on a desert island, Queen makes himself a bow and over the following months becomes an expert bowman. After saving a ship that anchors offshore, Queen arrives at his purpose in life: "I knew then, in that split-second, that my existence on the island could now serve a useful purpose! When I returned to civilization, I would fight crime with my trick arrows!" Back home, Queen creates a suitably heroic costume and pairs up with young Speedy, who in "real life" as Roy Harper has been trained in archery by Indians and so is himself an expert archer.


AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE JOHN V. LINDSAY MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY
DC
NOV
ONLY 25¢ bigger & better
GREEN LANTERN
CO-STARRING
GREEN ARROW
MORE DEADLY THAN THE ATOM BOMB!
WINNER of ACADEMY AWARD for BEST COMIC!

Green Lantern/Green Arrow #86 © 1971 DC Comics. (Cover art by Neal Adams.)

The strip was usually well crafted, if a little lacking in personality, but that DC believed in it is clear from its transfer to *Adventure Comics,* where it ran until 1960. A simultaneous backup slot in *World's Finest Comics* lasted several years longer (until 1964). Within a few months of their creation, the intrepid duo were inducted into the Seven Soldiers of Victory in *Leading Comics,* where they enjoyed rather improbable adventures throughout the war. The Emerald Archer, as he was often called, and Speedy tangled with minor villains like the Wizard, Clock King, and the Rainbow Archer throughout the 1940s and 1950s, but the 1960s superhero boom rather passed them by. With little in the way of character development or depth, Green Arrow had to make do with membership in the Justice League of America, while Speedy joined the Teen Titans. However, by the turn of the decade both archers were to become among the most talked-about heroes in comics.

In late 1969, Green Arrow first gained a new costume and goatee beard (courtesy of artist Neal Adams in *The Brave and the Bold* #85), and then lost his fortune to a crooked business partner (thanks to writer Denny O'Neil in *Justice League* #75). In that same issue of *Justice League* he moved to the ghetto and met the Black Canary, who would become his love interest for the next few decades. Finally, he co-headlined with Green Lantern in a series of comics by O'Neil and Adams that tackled such "relevance" issues as race relations, ecology, politics, business corruption, and drugs, in an award-winning series of strips that generated vast amounts of publicity. Readers now enjoyed an older Oliver Queen—passionate, belligerent, hot-headed, and radical. Here was a character that had gone from a one-dimensional cipher to an embodiment of the zeitgeist, equal parts hippie, hero, and rabble-rouser. Speedy, on the other hand, personified the era's darker side as he descended into drug addiction in a story that garnered widespread praise (in *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85 and #86), including an endorsement from New York City's mayor at the time, John Lindsay.

Despite all this attention, the Green Lantern/Green Arrow partnership lasted only a couple of years, and the archer had to be content with numerous backup features, invariably with Black Canary, in such books as *World's Finest, Action Comics,* and *The Flash,* as well as numerous *Justice League* comics throughout the 1970s. These shorter tales gradually saw a mellowing of the rhetoric and a penchant for wisecracks emerging in its place, but more recent stories have chronicled a steady descent into darkness. Green Arrow was given his first (short-lived) solo comic in 1983, followed a few years later by Mike Grell's hard-hitting *Longbow Hunters* series, which was set in Seattle's mean streets and featured a harrowing sequence in which the Black Canary was brutally tortured.

The *Longbow Hunters* went on to a long-running "mature readers only" series that continued in much the same violent, seedy vein and became a big-selling *cause célèbre* for its grim, violent tone. The Canary and Arrow finally split up and new cast members Shado (a female Japanese assassin) and Eddie Fryes (a sort of dissolute secret agent) were introduced, along with a long-lost—and previously unknown—son, Connor Hawke. As part of its wide-ranging *Zero Hour* series in the mid-1990s, DC killed off Oliver Queen in an airplane explosion, and Hawke became a new, more youthful Green Arrow. Hawke's idealism and inexperience breathed new life into the strip, but few doubted that his father would one day return. True to form, in 2001 new writer (and cult film director) Kevin Smith (*Clerks, Chasing Amy*) duly resurrected him from the dead. Smith was replaced by best-selling author Brad Meltzer and other successors.

The original Green Arrow finally married Black Canary. However, after a villain called Prometheus destroyed much of Green Arrow's home base, Star City, killing thousands of people, Green Arrow killed him. Green Arrow surrendered to the authorities, but was found not guilty of murder. However, Black Canary put an end to their marriage.

Oliver Queen stars as the title hero in the new ongoing *Green Arrow* comic book series that launched in September 2011, written by JT Krul and drawn by Dan Jurgens.

Green Arrow, in Neal Adams' bearded version, appears in many episodes of the animated TV series *Justice League Unlimited.* Green Arrow also appears in numerous episodes of *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* but without the beard, and in the Golden Age version of his costume.

Played by Justin Hartley, Green Arrow appeared in the last five seasons of the live-action television series *Smallville.* Although Black Canary also turned up on *Smallville,* Oliver Queen/Green Arrow instead became romantically involved on the show with Lois Lane, and ultimately married Clark Kent's friend and confidante Chloe Sullivan. *—DAR & PS*

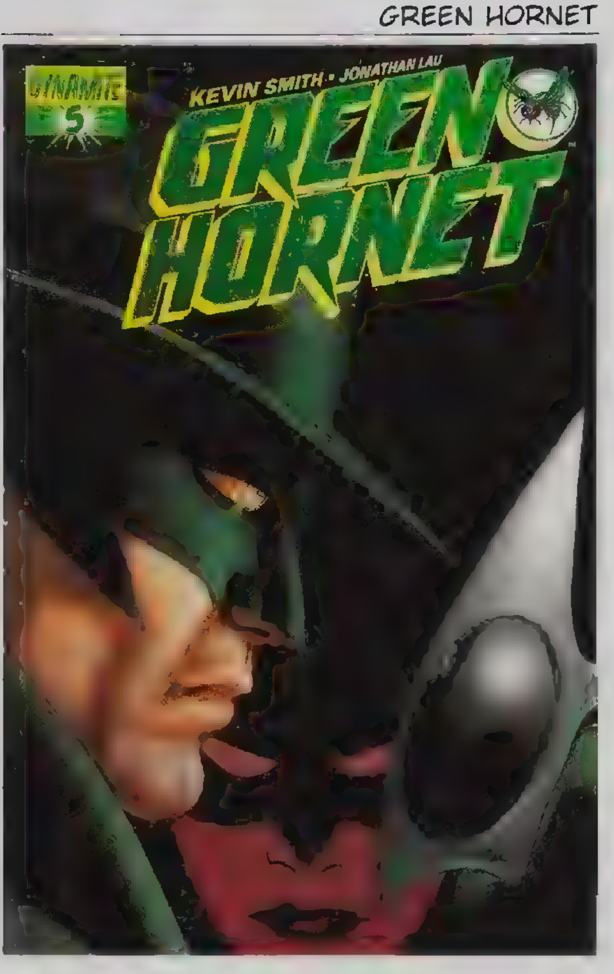
Green Hornet

Heroes who operate on both sides of the law have long been popular in comics and crime fiction. Such a character is the masked mystery man called the Green Hornet, a crime fighter who gamboled with gangsters in order to sting them for apprehension.

The Green Hornet and Kato first appeared in a 1936 radio drama produced by George W. Trendle, whose previous program, *The Lone Ranger,* was a tremendous (and perennial) success. Revisiting *The Lone Ranger*'s proven formula—an enigmatic masked hero accompanied by a loyal ethnic partner (in the Ranger's case, his Native American companion, Tonto)—*The Green Hornet* took the concept one step further, linking the two series into a generational saga. Historians acknowledge radio scriptwriter Fran Striker as the principal creator of the Green Hornet.

The Green Hornet is actually Britt Reid, whose father Dan is the Lone Ranger's nephew. The Ranger's penchant for silver bullets (and even his horse's name) was derived from the family's silver mine, which dispassionate Britt inherits and begins to squander as a playboy. He picks up a manservant on an excursion to Japan, after rescuing a young man named Kato from peril; Kato returns the favor by dedicating his life to his redeemer. Back in the States, Reid assumes the family business—*The Daily Sentinel* newspaper, which targets organized crime—and rises beyond his flippancy as he matures into its publisher. On a nighttime jaunt to collect evidence against mobsters for a *Sentinel* exposé, Reid and chauffeur Kato are spotted at the scene of the crime in their unique sedan—the Black Beauty—and the car is added to the police's most-wanted list. Reid, abetted by his executive assistant Lenore Case and a handful of confidantes within the police department, preserves his underworld branding by adopting the masked identity of the Green Hornet, and along with Kato, an accomplished martial artist, begins a battle against crime by pretending to be on its side.

The Green Hornet ran on radio for sixteen years, as the hero, clad simply in a trench coat, eyemask, and fedora, used his steel-piercing, vibrating Hornet's Sting to burst through gangsters' walls and his Gas Gun to render them unconscious. High-kicking Kato was on hand to karate-chop the crooks his partner didn't gas. The heroes' popularity extended beyond the airwaves: They headlined a pair of quickly produced movie serials from Universal Studios—*The Green Hornet*



Green Hornet #5 © 2010 The Green Hornet, Inc. Published by Dynamite Entertainment. (Cover art by John Cassaday.)

and *The Green Hornet Strikes Again* (both 1940)—and a smattering of comic books from publishers Holyoke, Harvey, and Dell. During the 1940s, a handful of Big Little Books written by Striker were published, including *The Green Hornet Strikes, The Green Hornet Returns,* and *The Green Hornet Cracks Down.*

By the early 1950s, the buzz around the Green Hornet had faded, and Kato parked the Black Beauty in the garage of pop-culture limbo, until September 1966. *The Green Hornet,* a weekly live-action television series, premiered that month, courtesy of producer William Dozier, the man responsible for bringing *Batman* to the tube nine months prior. The show's handsome lead Van Williams was eclipsed by his two co-stars: in the role of Kato, Asian import Bruce Lee, an accomplished martial artist whose proficiency soon kicked off a series of 1970s kung-fu movies; and the Black Beauty, a customized 1966 Chrysler Imperial Crown brimming with a hornet's nest of gadgets, including a secret surveillance camera, laser cannon, and smoke screen. The Black Beauty and its costumed occupants were heavily merchandized in the form of trading cards, comic and coloring books, bendable figures, a lunchbox, and miniature cars. Jazz trumpeter Al Hirt's frenetic "Flight of the Bumblebee" theme was a pop-music hit, but the show was not: *The Green Hornet* was swatted from the schedule after one season.

It took more than two decades before the Green Hornet and Kato reappeared. In 1989, Now Comics launched *The Green Hornet*, expanding the legend of both heroes with their sons and daughters assuming their fathers' legacies. While briefly popular, Now's *Hornet* comic books disappeared in late 1994. Since that point, at least two attempts to bring the Green Hornet to the big screen (with George Clooney and Greg Kinnear, respectively, in the title role) have fizzled. In 2004 filmmaker Kevin Smith was hired to write and direct a *Green Hornet* movie, but Smith ended up dropping out of the project.

However, Smith wrote the initial story arc for a new *Green Hornet* comics series, launched in 2010 by Dynamite Entertainment. Smith incorporated concepts from his earlier *Green Hornet* screenplay. In Smith's comics story Britt Reid is murdered by an assassin called the Black Hornet, who serves Japanese criminals. Kato contacts Reid's son, Britt Reid, Jr., who becomes the new Green Hornet. Kato's daughter Mulan Kato, a formidable martial artist, becomes the new Green Hornet's masked partner. Dynamite has continued publishing various *Green Hornet* comics series.

Columbia Pictures finally released *The Green Hornet* live action movie in January 2011, an action-adventure comedy directed by Michel Gondry, written by actor Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, starring Rogen as the Green Hornet, Jay Chou as Kato, and Cameron Diaz. —*ME & PS*

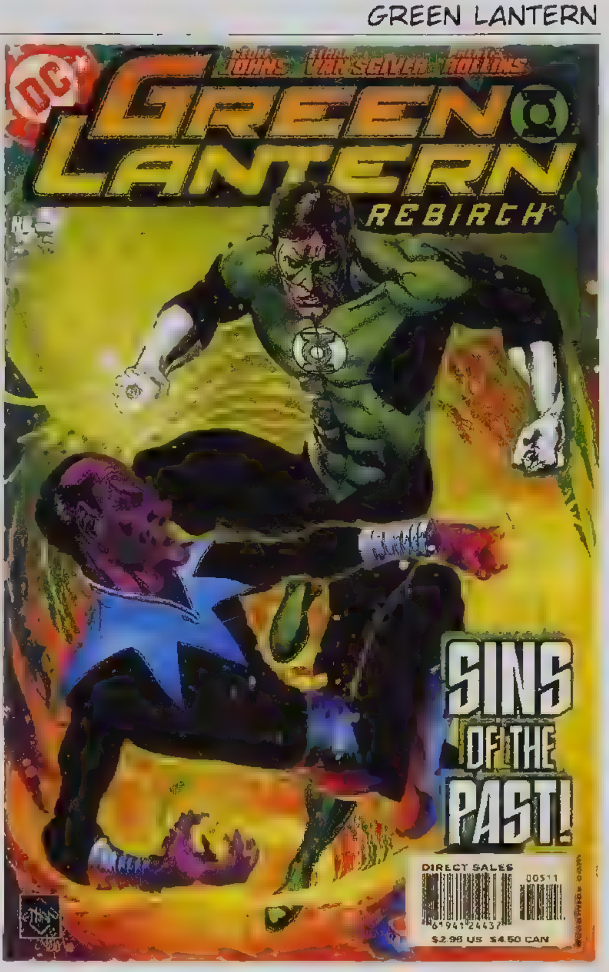
Green Lantern

From humble beginnings, the Green Lantern concept has evolved through numerous revamps (with five Lanterns as of 2004), a complex mythology, and countless spin-offs. The character was first launched in July 1940 by artist Mart Nodell, with additional input from Batman writer Bill Finger, in the pages of *All-American Comics* #16 and immediately became one of DC Comics' biggest and most powerful stars. Like many early superheroes, his origin was based in magic; while working on a bridge, construction worker Alan Scott comes across a green lantern, which he later discovers was made out of a meteor. Somewhat improbably, the lantern speaks to Scott, instructing him to make a ring out of its extraterrestrial material. The ring would transform thought into reality as long as he touched the lantern once every twenty-four hours. Indeed, the power ring enables Scott to fly and take on any kind of superpower. In short order, Scott fashions himself a garish red-and-green costume (duly acknowledging, "I must have a costume that is so bizarre that once I am seen I will never be forgotten") and then, of course, embarks on a career of crime fighting.

Initial stories concentrated on the Lantern's dispatching ordinary hoods, often in a surprisingly ruthless manner, but as his powers became increasingly mind-boggling (from flying to mind-reading and, eventually, imperviousness to bullets), his villains also needed to be more far-fetched. Colorful criminals such as the Sportsmaster and the Harlequin (a female villain who was also in love with Green Lantern) began to predominate, but by far the most remarkable protagonist was Solomon Grundy—a giant reanimated corpse—created by noted science fiction author and regular Green Lantern writer Alfred Bester. By this point, DC had limited the hero's abilities somewhat by making his ring powerless against wood, but he was still a very potent wish-fulfillment figure for his fans. In addition to appearing in more than eighty issues of *All-American*, he also starred in his own solo comic for eight years, in *Comic Cavalcade*, and in many issues of *All Star Comics* as one of the principal members of the Justice Society until that comic's cancellation in 1951.

Alan Scott continued to appear throughout the 1960s as part of the Justice Society and has been a constant member of the group in its many revivals, rebirths, and relaunches ever since. Following the successful revamp of the Flash in 1956, editor Julius Schwartz (along with John Broome on scripts and Gil Kane on art) turned his sights on Green Lantern. The new Green Lantern premiered in September 1959 in DC's *Showcase* #22, with a new history: Test pilot Hal Jordan chances upon the crashed space ship of an emerald-garbed, red-skinned alien named Abin Sur. With his dying breath, the alien passes on his green ring to Jordan, whereupon he becomes transformed into an identically clothed superhero. Like his predecessor, this Green Lantern could use the ring to make his thoughts reality and he, too, needed a lantern to recharge the ring, but its weakness this time was to anything colored yellow (which inevitably was the cue for countless stories about yellow aliens, villains, and monsters). When the Lantern (nicknamed the Emerald Crusader) recharged his ring every day, he recited an oath that soon became his mantra: "In brightest day, in blackest night, no evil shall escape my sight. Let those who worship evil's might, beware my power—Green Lantern's light!"

It was the ring's background that differentiated the two strips; it seems that the later Green Lantern was but one of many ring-wielding superheroes across the universe—members of a sort of intergalactic police force. The Green Lanterns were picked by small, blue-skinned aliens, known as the "Guardians of Oa," as the bravest individuals on their own planets, and with their almost omnipotent rings they were sworn to uphold justice and defeat evil wherever it may appear. The Lantern stories were dynamic and inventive, often revolving around some alien menace or scientific conundrum, but characterization was not a strong feature. Hal Jordan was based on Gil Kane's neighbor at the time (an up-and-coming actor by the name of Paul Newman), and despite an attractive supporting cast, including girlfriend Carol Ferris and best buddy "Thomas "Pieface" Kalmaku," he was something of a loner. The principal villains were the rogue Green Lantern, Sinestro, and the powerful Star Sapphire—in reality Jordan's schizophrenic girlfriend Ferris. Other major Silver Age Green Lantern villains included Black Hand, Evil Star, Hector Hammond, the Shark, Sonar, and the Tattooed Man.



Green Lantern #171 © 1983 DC Comics. (Cover art by Gil Kane.)

Green Lantern started appearing in his own self-titled comic in 1960, soon became a regular member of the Justice League of America, and was very much one of DC's top characters throughout the 1960s. Kane developed into one of comics' most exciting artists, but when he left the title to try becoming a publisher himself, Green Lantern's popularity dropped. Eventually the decision was made to boost sales by introducing the Green Arrow in a retitled *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic, featuring the creative team of writer Denny O'Neil and artist Neal Adams. Over the course of fourteen issues (#76–#89), the comic became one of the most talked-about titles of the 1970s, tapping into the radical politics of the era and the growth of the counterculture. The Green Lantern was portrayed as the arch-establishment figure, whose complacency was constantly challenged by the anti-establishment firebrand, the Green Arrow. As the voice of the streets, O'Neil and Adams introduced the

Ryan Reynolds stars as the Green Lantern in the 2011 film. (Marvel/Paramount / The Kobal Collection.)

concept of "relevance" to comics, tackling a different social topic in each issue, including race relations, Native American rights, women's liberation, pollution, consumerism, drugs, and campus unrest—subject matter previously untapped in the comic book world.

Surprisingly, despite enormous media interest, numerous industry awards, college tours, and Adams' outstanding draftsmanship, sales were never strong (though conspiracy theorists have suggested that issues were appropriated by organized crime and sold to fans later) and the comic was canceled in 1972. Backup strips in *The Flash* eventually led to the *Green Lantern* series' revival in 1976, and it continued in various guises until 1988. Green Arrow left the comic in 1979 and it was retitled *Green Lantern Corps* for its last few years, but it was mostly a pale shadow of the pioneering relevance period. *The Green Lantern Corps* retitling reflected the increasing number of Green Lanterns that had popped up over the years, many of them enjoying success in their own right.

The first of the new Green Lanterns at around this time (though originally appearing in 1968) was Guy Gardner, who was Hal Jordan's replacement should anything happen to him. Gardner later took over Jordan's ring and became a rather bad-tempered (and occasionally villainous) superhero, with an appalling, pudding-bowl haircut. The fans loved his bad attitude, and in the 1980s he became a regular in the Justice League, which led to his own comic in 1992; this ran for more than four years. The next replacement Lantern to star in a comic was John Stewart—one of the earliest African American heroes—who first appeared in the O'Neil/Adams period and was portrayed as a proud defender of the black community. From the 1980s to the 2000s, he has periodically taken over the lead role in the Green Lantern comic and has made numerous appearances without ever building up a large fan base (though outside the comics medium he's had a shot at a whole new audience as the Lantern who got the call for Cartoon Network's popular *Justice League* show). Even alien Green Lanterns have broken out of the background, with the pug-faced Kilowog joining the Justice League, and another short-lived *Green Lantern Corps* comic running (albeit quarterly) from 1992 to 1994.

In 1989, a miniseries called *Emerald Dawn* was meant to herald a new beginning for the character, but the following years have been almost impossibly complex, so that even the most devoted fan could be forgiven for becoming confused. Hal Jordan developed a drinking problem and then, having seen his home city destroyed, went mad and turned on his overseers, the Guardians of Oa. Not surprisingly, the Guardians resolved to replace him and discovered young artist Kyle Rayner (in *Green Lantern* vol. 2 #48, 1994), who has been DC's main Green Lantern ever since. Jordan, meanwhile, became a character called Parallax and flounced around the universe, killing people before being killed himself. (It was later revealed that Jordan had been under the mental influence of an evil entity called Parallax.) Jordan was resurrected several years later as the Spectre.

Alive and sane once more, Hal Jordan returned to his role of Green Lantern in the comics series *Green Lantern: Rebirth* (2004–2005), written by Geoff Johns and drawn by Ethan Van Sciver. In September 2011 DC Comics launched four new Green Lantern-related comics series: *Green Lantern,* starring Hal Jordan, written by Geoff Johns and drawn by Doug Mahnke; *Green Lantern Corps* #1, featuring Guy Gardner and John Stewart; *Green Lantern: The New Guardians* #1, starring Kyle Rayner; and *Red Lanterns* #1, about the Green Lantern Corps' ruthless counterparts, the Red Lantern Corps, led by Atrocitus.

In June 2011 Warner Bros. released a live action *Green Lantern* movie directed by Martin Campbell and starring Ryan Reynolds as Hal Jordan. The cast also includes Blake Lively as Carol Ferris, Mark Strong as Sinestro, Peter Saarsgard as the villain Hector Hammond, Michael Clarke Duncan as the voice of Kilowog, and Clancy Brown as the voice of Parallax.

Hal Jordan is Green Lantern in a number of direct to-video animated films, including *Justice League: The New Frontier* (2008) (in which Hal is voiced by David Boreanaz, and Carol Ferris is played by Brooke Shields), *Green Lantern: First Flight* (2009) (with Christopher Meloni as Hal, Victor Garber as Sinestro, Olivia d'Abo as Carol Ferris, and Michael Madsen as Kilowog), and *Green Lantern: Emerald Knights* (2011), with Nathan Fillion as Hal and Jason Isaacs as Sinestro.

A new computer-animated *Green Lantern: The Animated Series,* produced by Bruce Timm, premiered in 2011 on Cartoon Network. Hal Jordan has even appeared with Daffy Duck in a 2003 episode of the animated TV series *Duck Dodgers,* with filmmaker Kevin Smith as the voice of Hal and John de Lancie as Sinestro. The coming years will doubtless bring more plot twists and more Green Lanterns, but for many fans, Hal Jordan will remain the one true Lantern. *—DAR & PS*

Guardians of the Galaxy

The idea of comrades-in-arms struggling against tyranny is a mainstay of fiction and folklore older than Robin Hood. Superhero comics have long provided a natural stage for stories of such underdog heroes. The Guardians of the Galaxy, originally created for a one-shot Marvel Comics story (*Marvel Super-Heroes* vol. 1 #18, 1969) by writer Arnold Drake and artist Gene Colan, carries this time-honored tradition forward into the year 3007 C.E. By this time, Earth, the other planets of the solar system, and the human colony at Alpha Centauri have all fallen under the dominion of the Badoon, a hostile race of sentient alien reptiles.

The Badoon invasion brings together a disparate group of humans who hail from points all across the solar system and beyond, echoing Akira Kurosawa's classic 1954 film *The Seven Samurai* (and its 1960 American clone *The Magnificent Seven*). Charlie-27, a human soldier who has been genetically enhanced (with gigantic muscles and natural body armor) for life on a Jupiter colony, returns from offworld duty to discover his Jovian home overrun by Badoon forces. Teleporting to Pluto, he encounters that world's only survivor, Martinex (a crystalline human, genetically altered to survive the frigid Plutonian environment). To thwart the Badoon occupying Pluto, Charlie 27 and Martinex work together to sabotage the planet's industrial infrastructure before teleporting to Earth, where they meet Vance Astro and Yondu. Astro (a.k.a. Astrovik) is an Earth-born, twentieth-century astronaut recently awakened from a cryogenic suspension that has given him powerful psionic abilities while dooming him to live out his life inside a protective suit that keeps him from aging naturally. Yondu is a nonhuman native of Alpha Centauri, and the last of his kind. The pair have just arrived on Earth after fleeing the Badoon-overrun Alpha Centauri system in a commandeered, faster-than-light starship. Though Vance and Yondu fall into Badoon hands on Earth, Charlie-27 and Martinex rescue them, whereupon the quartet adopts the collective name the Guardians of the Galaxy (not to be confused with DC Comics' blue-skinned alien Guardians, who presided over the Green Lantern Corps in the Silver Age [1956–1969] and Bronze Age [1970–1979] of superhero comics). The sworn purpose of this small group of crusaders is to drive the Badoon from every one of their strongholds across the entire galaxy. They flit around the Milky Way in a spaceship called *Freedom's Lady.*

Although the Guardians vanished from the comics spinner-racks after their 1969 debut, they reappeared half a decade later (*Marvel Two-In-One* #4 and #5, 1974), under the creative direction of writer Steve Gerber and penciler Sal Buscema. It is now 3014 C.E., and Captain America and the Fantastic Four's Thing (both from the twentieth century) become temporarily embroiled in the Guardians' ongoing battle for freedom, as do the Defenders (also from the twentieth century) a year later (*Defenders* #26–29, 1975). Together they help drive the Badoon from Earth's solar system and the adjacent regions of space. Inspired by Captain America (Astrovik is a particularly enthusiastic fan of Cap's wartime exploits), the Guardians name their starship after him and take the craft on an interstellar journey of discovery and adventure.

During these wanderings, the group encounters and inducts other members: Nikki (a human woman genetically engineered to survive the heat of her homeworld Mercury), and a pair of physically/psychically melded Arcturians named Starhawk (a former Defender now caught in a time-loop that forces him to relive his life repeatedly) and Aleta (Starhawk's former wife and present foster-sister, who has the ability to manipulate light energy). Now a septet, the Guardians explore the galaxy and defend it from the Badoon and other superpowered menaces in the pages of *Marvel Presents* (beginning in issue #3, 1976). Unfortunately, writers Steve Gerber and Roger Stern, and penciler Allen Milgrom, failed to sustain a large enough audience to continue the series, and the Guardians feature died a quick and ignominious death (along with *Marvel Presents* itself, whose twelfth and final issue was released in 1977).

The Guardians subsequently reached their highest 1970s readership levels when they time-traveled back to the twentieth century to help resolve the "Korvac saga" of 1978, a story arc crafted by writers Jim Shooter, Bill Mantlo, and David Michelinie and artists George Pérez, Sal Buscema, and David Wenzel. In this story, the Avengers struggle to prevent the sudden omnipotence of a previously ordinary man (Michael Korvac) from wreaking havoc across the cosmos (*The Avengers* #167–#168, #173–#177). Before returning to the thirty-first century, following Korvac's defeat, Vance Astrovik meets his younger twentieth-century self and talks him out of becoming an astronaut in order to prevent his becoming forever trapped in the containment suit. Unfortunately for both Astroviks, this action creates a psionic backlash between the two men, prematurely awakening the younger man's psychic abilities, thereby allowing him to become Marvel Boy in the later series *The New Warriors* (1990–1996, 1999–2000). This development split the Guardians' future off from Marvel's main timeline, sequestering it in one of comicdom's many "alternate futures." Undeterred by being rendered effectively apocryphal, the Guardians forged a prominent one-shot partnership with Spider-Man the following year (*Marvel Team-Up* #86, written by *X-Men* scribe Chris Claremont with pencils by Allyn Brodsky), but made only infrequent guest appearances during the ensuing decade (*The Avengers* #264, 1986; *The Sensational She-Hulk* #6, 1989).

But the Guardians were not destined for permanent obscurity. In 1990, Marvel placed the team in the hands of writer-artist Jim Valentino. Valentino's nearly three-year tenure with the Guardians reveals his abiding love for Marvel's superheroes and their history, delving more deeply than ever before into the motivations of the team's individual members. Returning the Guardians to their alternate thirty-first century, Valentino began the series by taking the team on a quest for the indestructible shield of Vance Astrovik's most revered hero, Captain America (*Guardians of the Galaxy* #1–#6, 1990). The quest succeeds, although the Guardians are faced along the way by such powerful foes as Taserface (whose powers are self-explanatory), Firelord (a former herald of the world-eating Galactus, who subsequently becomes a reserve member of the group), and the Stark (aliens who have based their technology and weaponry upon the armored twentieth-century superhero Iron Man, a.k.a. munitions manufacturer Tony Stark).

Under Valentino the Guardians became less a gang of ragtag freedom fighters and more a band of explorers and adventurers, an amalgam of *Avengers*-type team superheroics and *Star Trek*–style space opera. The Guardians still found the time to overthrow despotic rulers, however, unseating Rancor, a descendant of the X-Men's Wolverine who had taken over a lost human colony called Haven, which is ultimately destroyed by a future version of the world-devouring Phoenix after the Guardians evacuate the planet (*Guardians of the Galaxy* #9–#12, 1991). The Guardians subsequently add a shapechanging Havenite named Replica to their ranks (*Guardians of the Galaxy Annual* #2, 1992).

After Valentino's departure from Marvel for Image Comics, the Guardians' series continued under writer Michael Gallagher, finally concluding in 1995 with issue #62. But the Guardians weren't quite ready to vanish into comics oblivion, turning up again as guest stars occasionally during the 1990s in various Marvel titles and headlining in a four-issue miniseries written by Valentino's successor, Michael Gallagher, and penciled by Kevin West and Yancey Labat (*Galactic Guardians,* 1994).

The writing team of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning introduced a new team of Guardians, set in the present day, in *Guardians of the Galaxy* Vol. 2 #1 (May 2008). Members have included Adam Warlock, Bug (from *The Micronauts*), Drax the Destroyer, Gamora, Groot (a monster created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in *Tales to Astonish* #13 in 1960), Jack Flag (a former protégé of Captain America), Mantis, Martyr (the reportedly deceased Phyla-Vell, the daughter of the original Captain Mar-Vell), Moondragon, Rocket Raccoon, Star-Lord, and Cosmo the Spacedog (a talking canine with telepathic powers). This new series and the original one are linked through the presence of Vance Astro, now also known as Major Victory, who has become a member of the present-day team. *—MAM & PS*

Hanna-Barbera Heroes

William Hanna and Joseph Barbera were pioneers of television animation. Having learned the ropes by directing *Tom and Jerry* theatrical cartoons for MGM in the 1940s and 1950s, they adapted their craft to the small screen, launching a pantheon of cartoon greats including the Flintstones, Yogi Bear, Jonny Quest, Scooby-Doo, and their first superhero (not counting Quick Draw McGraw's Zorro parody El Kabong, that is)—Atom Ant.

This miniature muscle-mite first buzzed into action in *The Atom Ant/Secret Squirrel Show* (1965). *Atom Ant* (voiced by Howard Morris and Don Messick) was a tiny titan engaging in pun-filled clashes with menaces large and small. Atom Ant can now be seen on the TV network Boomerang.

Beginning in 1966, superhero mania swept America, ignited by the success of the live-action *Batman* television series (1966–1968). The Hanna-Barbera studios quickly cranked out a host of animated superhero shows all their own. Premiering on CBS in September 1966, *Frankenstein Jr. and the Impossibles* was cut from the same tongue-in-cheek cloth as *Atom Ant. Frankenstein Jr.* was a masked and costumed computerized crime fighter who answered to his creator, trouble-prone prodigy Buzz Conroy. The Impossibles were a trio of pop musicians who, when summoned by their boss Big D, via a guitar-based TV monitor, transformed into … the Impossibles, a supergroup composed of Fluid Man, Coil Man, and Multi Man, who zoomed to crime scenes in their Impossicar.

Debuting concurrently was *Space Ghost and Dino Boy,* also on CBS. Space Ghost, an intergalactic superhero, designed by legendary comic book artist Alex Toth and voiced by Gary Owens (best known as the announcer on *Rowan and Martin's Laugh In*), was abetted by junior partners Jan and Jayce and their monkey Blip. Armed with ray-blasting wrist bands and his Invisibelt, Space Ghost tackled an army of alarming adversaries. Dino Boy was a contemporary kid lost in a dangerous society that had never evolved beyond its prehistoric state. *Space Ghost and Dino Boy* was played straight, an attitude Space Ghost maintained during a 1981 revival. Not so with the spectral hero's 1994 comeback, however: He became a wacky talk-show host, backed up by former foes Zorak, Moltar, and Brak, in the hilarious *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* program, originally telecast on Cartoon Network. Space Ghost (in his original form and his *Coast to Coast* revamp) has materialized over the decades into comic books from several publishers (most notably a 2005 DC Comics miniseries written by Joe Kelly with painted art by Ariel Olivetti).

For the 1967–1968 television season, Hanna-Barbera released an unprecedented amount of original superhero fare, with two new shows on CBS alone. *The Herculoids,* another series featuring Toth's designs, was set on the planet Quasar. It starred a family—King Zandor, Tara, and Dorno—who warded off assaulting monstrosities with the help of their unusual allies, the Herculoids: Tundro, a ten-legged rhino; Zok, a laser beam–firing flying dragon; Igoo, a super-strong rock creature; and the malleable Gloop and Gleep. The show's human family members were not superheroes, but the Herculoids were in effect "superpets." Hanna-Barbera also unveiled *Moby Dick and the Mighty Mightor* that year. Mightor was a prehistoric superhero. Each of his episodes began with a boy named Tor, who, when raising a magic club into the air (while exclaiming "Mightor!"), transformed into a powerful superhero. Also on the program, Herman Melville's great white whale became an amiable adventurer.

On NBC, Hanna-Barbera produced two shows for the 1967–1968 season. In *Young Samson and Goliath* an ordinary teenage boy and his pet dog were upgraded into the powerful hero Samson and his fierce lion Goliath. Prolific designer Toth was back again with *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio.* The lead feature was a winged superhero, who, with a cry of "Bir-r-r-rdman!", soared into action. (Birdman, like Space Ghost, got a droll facelift in 2001 in Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim* program package as *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law.*) Also appearing in the show was *The Galaxy Trio,* about a team of titans consisting of Vapor Man, Meteor Man, and Galaxy Girl. A more fascinating supergroup was adapted from Marvel Comics to ABC that year by Hanna-Barbera in *The Fantastic Four.*

By 1968, superheroes were falling out of vogue. Hanna-Barbera didn't produce a superhero program again until 1973—and this time they struck gold. *Super Friends,* a kid-friendly version of DC Comics' *Justice League of America,* began on ABC in September 1973. In a variety of incarnations, *Super Friends* continued well into the mid-1980s.

The success of *Super Friends* prompted Hanna-Barbera to try its hand at original superheroes again with *Hong Kong Phooey* (1974–1976), a kung-fu superhero canine voiced by Scatman Crothers. *Dynomutt, Dog Wonder,* began a successful run in 1976. Dynomutt was a laughably clumsy robot with extending paws (voiced by Frank Welker) who, along with the no-nonsense, square-jawed Blue Falcon (voiced by Gary Owens), tackled evildoers in Big City. *Captain Caveman and the Teen Angels* (1977) featured a mumbling, diminutive (and very hairy) stone-age superhero released (by teenage *Charlie's Angels* clones) into the present after a lengthy deep freeze. Captain Caveman (voiced by Mel Blanc, of Bugs Bunny fame) flew into action with a club and a deafening battle shriek ("Captain Ca-a-a-avema-a-a-an!") Basketball stars the Harlem Globetrotters got superpowers in the short-lived *The Super Globetrotters* (1979).

Hanna-Barbera also co-produced *The New Adventures of Captain Planet* (1993–1996), the sequel to the original animated TV series *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* (1990–1993), which had been co-produced by DIC Entertainment. Co-created by Ted Turner, the head of the Turner Broadcasting System, Captain Planet is a superhero who combats threats to Earth's natural environment. From 1998 to 2001 Hanna-Barbera was also the original producer of a highly successful, all-female animated superhero series, Craig McCracken's *The Powerpuff Girls.*

In 1991, Ted Turner's Turner Broadcasting System bought Hanna-Barbera productions, and Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera entered semi-retirement. Time Warner bought the Turner Broadcasting System in 1996. After Bill Hanna died in 2001, Hanna-Barbera was absorbed into Warner Bros. Animation; Joe Barbera died in 2006. Warner Bros. Animation now produces new animation involving classic Hanna-Barbera characters, principally Scooby-Doo.

Many of Hanna-Barbera's heroes have enjoyed exposure beyond their television roots. Space Ghost (in his original form and his *Coast to Coast* revamp) has materialized over the decades into comic books from several publishers (most notably the 2005 DC Comics miniseries written by Joe Kelly, with painted art by Ariel Olivetti), and Gold Key's *Hanna-Barbera Super TV Heroes* anthology (1967–1969) spotlighted not only the Ghost but also the Herculoids and several other characters. Space Ghost, Frankenstein Jr., and Shazzan each starred in Big Little Books, and most of the company's superheroes were merchandized in some fashion during the 1960s, from Give-a-Show projector slides, to Whitman Publishing Company coloring books, to perhaps the most unusual Hanna-Barbera collectible, the box of Space Ghost and Frankenstein Jr. "Bubble Club" bubble bath soap from Purex. Since the late 1990s, *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* pins, T-shirts, and coffee mugs have been available, as licensing and merchandising have become synonymous with successful animated properties. In the early twenty-first century, action-figure lines have immortalized Space Ghost and his villains; Blue Falcon and Dynomutt; and Birdman. Upscale coldcast porcelain sculptures of Space Ghost and "Harvey" Birdman were also released in 2002 and 2003. —*ME, PS, & GM*

The Hawk and the Dove

The Hawk and the Dove could only have sprung from the tumult of the late 1960s, and the pair encapsulated the conflicting ideologies Americans felt about the Vietnam War. The strip was the brainchild of the great comics maverick Steve Ditko, who dreamed up the concept of an aggressive superhero (the Hawk) teamed with a pacifist partner (the Dove). Ditko both plotted and drew the feature's first appearance in *Showcase* #75 (in 1968), but DC Comics paired him with writer Steve Skeates, who dialogued the strip. The first story introduced readers to brothers Hank and Don Hall, students during the time of the Vietnam War, who are transformed into a pair of superheroes by a voice in their heads (later revealed to be the Forces of Order—whoever they might be), the twist being that, while Hank/Hawk is more than happy to weigh in with both fists flying, Don/Dove refuses to fight.

In a delicious irony, the Hawk and the Dove conflict was mirrored by the strip's creative team. Staunch conservative Ditko plotted the stories with the idea that the Dove was essentially a useless weakling, while arch-liberal Skeates sympathized with pacifism and effectively rewrote the tales to favor the Dove. The feature was a hit in *Showcase*, and five months later was given its own title, aptly called *The Hawk and the Dove*. However, Ditko quit after two issues, unhappy with the direction the comic was taking. The dilemma of what to do with a superhero who will not fight eventually came to a head when Ditko's successor, Gil Kane, finally bowed to the inevitable and had the Dove batter some hoods into submission, mistakenly believing them to have killed his brother. Despite this, the public seemed unsure of what to make of the team and the comic was canceled with its sixth issue (in mid-1969), but editor Dick Giordano believed in the concept and took the heroes over to another of his titles, the *Teen Titans*. After five issues as team members, the Hawk and the Dove were cast aside by an incoming editor and fell into obscurity.

With the exception of a brief return to the *Teen Titans* in 1978, the duo's next significant appearance was in DC Comics' house-cleaning exercise *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Among the various heroes killed off in this miniseries was, inevitably, that perennial whipping boy, the Dove—crushed by a falling wall. Surprisingly, the Dove's death seemed to remind DC that it had a good concept going to waste and so, soon after, the husband-and-wife team of Karl and Barbara Kesel revived the strip with a five-issue miniseries in 1988. It seems that the ever-vigilant Forces of Order had noticed the Dove's demise and promptly gave his powers to a new hero, this time a girl: young student Dawn Granger. After his brother's death, the ever-volatile Hawk had become more violent than ever, but eventually he accepted the new Dove, who was a bit more proactive than the original had been.

The miniseries contrasted crunchingly violent action with some zippy dialogue, and led to a regular series in 1989, but the fates were against it. DC had plans for a title called *Armageddon 2001*, which was to involve Captain Atom turning bad and becoming a villain called Monarch, but at the last minute word got out to howls of fan protest, and in their search for a replacement the publishers settled on the Hawk. As Monarch, the Hawk was supposed to have killed just about all of DC's heroes, but a character called Waverider traveled back from the future to stop him, in the nick of time. Perhaps inevitably, *Armageddon 2001* was followed by yet another earth-shattering miniseries in 1994: *Zero Hour.* Once again, the Hawk/Monarch was back, this time as the even more villainous Extant. In the ensuing battle, Extant killed or maimed various members of the Justice Society in a manner that would surely have horrified his creators.

Never a company to abandon a concept for good, DC revived the *The Hawk and the Dove* title once more in 1997, for a five-issue run with a completely different duo. Once again, the Forces of Order bestowed their powers on two young people, but this time the genders were reversed, with the Hawk being army cadet, Sasha Marten, and the Dove a laid-back rock musician called Wiley Wolverton. Another new twist was that, on shouting out the name "Hawk" or "Dove" (the traditional method used by previous Hawks and Doves to transform themselves), the pair sprouted wings and developed piercing shrieks. The inevitable personality clashes were tempered by a growing romance, but the amiable strip did not lead to any further starring appearances from this unique superhero team.

Dawn returned in 2003 in the pages of *JSA* and subsequently, as the Dove, teamed up with her sister Holly Granger, who became the new Hawk in *Teen Titans*. In *Blackest Night* (2009–2010), Hank Hall, the original Hawk, was resurrected as an evil "Black Lantern." Holly too becomes a Black Lantern and is destroyed. At the end of the *Blackest Night* series, Hank is restored to life as his true self. Hank and Dawn, as Hawk and Dove, subsequently join the team Birds of Prey.

In September 2011, DC Comics launched a new *Hawk and Dove* monthly comics series, featuring Hank Hall and Dawn Granger in the title roles, written by Sterling Gates and drawn by Rob Liefeld. The original Hawk and Dove, Hank and Don Hall, have appeared in animation in both *Justice League Unlimited* and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* —*DAR & PS*

Hawkeye

After a short career as a supervillain, Clint Barton, alias Hawkeye the Archer, has been a nearly constant fixture in the Marvel Comics firmament. His first appearance was in the Iron Man strip in *Tales of Suspense* #57 (1964), which relates how he leaves a successful career as a circus archer for the newly fashionable occupation of superhero. Stumbling across a jewelry heist, he is mistakenly taken by the police to be the gang's ringleader. Embittered by the experience, he turns to crime, spurred on by the deadly Russian spy, the Black Widow. Following several attacks on Iron Man, he sees the error of his ways when the Black Widow is seriously injured by her communist masters. As luck would have it, the Avengers are advertising for new members, and he is duly welcomed into the team. And so began Hawkeye's decades-long association with this superteam.

With his troubled background as an orphan (brought into the circus by the treacherous Swordsman), Hawkeye was something of a rough diamond—initially hot-headed, arrogant, and prone to wise-cracking. Inevitably, readers took him to their hearts, and he was one of the Avengers' most steadfast members for a good ten years. While not physically as imposing as his colleagues, he possessed a perfect aim, and with his seemingly inexhaustible supply of trick arrows (acid spray, power blast, suction, deafener, flare, knock out gas), he made a valuable contribution to the group. However, throughout the 1960s, the ever-present Black Widow (whom he gradually convinced to defect) was a regular presence in the comic and on his mind. At the end of that decade, in order to rescue his beloved, Hawkeye took a swig of growth serum and became the giant-sized Goliath, a role he kept for the next several years.

The next Hawkeye to hit the comics scene was a villain from an alternate Earth and a member of the Squadron Supreme (*Avengers* #85), a kind of anti-Avengers based satirically on DC Comics' Justice League; this Hawkeye later became known as Golden Archer. Despite his own formidable abilities, Clint Barton/Goliath was always vulnerable to a sudden loss of growth serum, and when that finally happened during the renowned Kree-Skrull War (in 1971), he found that his old skills as an archer had not deserted him. Although he was briefly happy as Hawkeye once more, the ensuing decade (and indeed his subsequent superhero career) was a restless one, which saw him leave, rejoin, and leave the team again. During his various absences from the Avengers, Hawkeye joined the Defenders, briefly adopted the Golden Archer's name to pose as a villain and coax a disillusioned Watergate-era Captain America out of retirement, and rode off into the West with the time-displaced cowboy hero the Two-Gun Kid.

In the late 1970s, following yet another stint with the Avengers, he was rejected by a government-appointed advisor and quit superheroing in disgust, ending up as chief of security at Cross Technologies. This period is later described in Hawkeye's first solo outing (in a 1983 miniseries written and drawn by Mark Gruenwald), which was followed by starring roles in *Solo Avengers* and *Avengers Spotlight*. Inevitably, Cross Technologies turned out to be a front for organized crime, but during the ensuing ruckus Hawkeye fell in love with and married Barbara "Bobbi" Morse, a.k.a. the costumed adventurer Mockingbird. Together, the pair recruited their own team, the West Coast Avengers (featuring Iron Man, Tigra, and Wonder Man), which contributed to making the 1980s probably Hawkeye's finest hour commercially.

Perhaps reasoning that nothing breeds apathy more than contentment, Marvel then decided to wreck poor old Hawkeye's life. The West Coast Avengers began to fall apart and his beloved Mockingbird was killed by the evil demon Mephisto (an uneven contest if ever there was one). The rest of the group split off to form the Force Works, while Hawkeye retreated to the wilderness to indulge in some serious brooding. Feeling the need for human company, he drifted back to the Avengers before becoming restless once more and deciding to throw in his lot with Marvel's newest team, the Thunderbolts. This was one of the surprise hits of the 1990s, and its premise of a group entirely made up of masquerading ex-criminals was clearly as innovative and tempting to an ex-baddie like Hawkeye as it was to its many fans. In 1998, his second solo comic hit the stands, but by 2003, the Thunderbolts concept was in trouble and the title was radically reworked into a supervillain equivalent of David Fincher's film *Fight Club* (1999). Hawkeye was out of a job once more, though yet another solo series (and Avengers slot) continued through 2004.

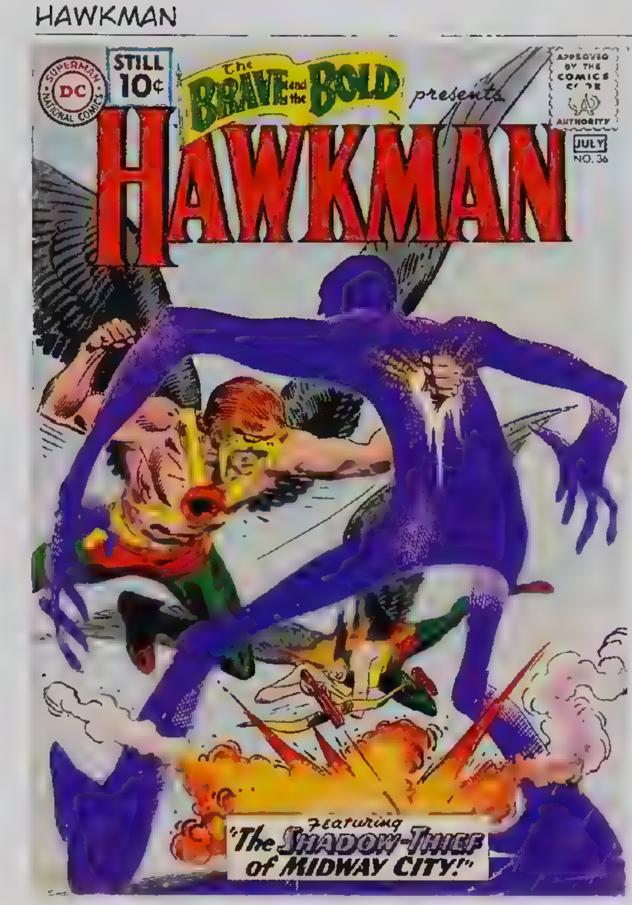
Hawkeye sacrificed his life in combat against an alien Kree spacecraft, But as a result of the Scarlet Witch's alterations of reality, Hawkeye was resurrected. Eventually, Clint Barton joins the New Avengers, but adopts the new, costumed identity of Ronin. (The previous Ronin was Maya Lopez, the member of the New Avengers who is known as Echo, Though she has the handicap of deafness, she possesses "photographic reflexes," enabling her to copy the movements of other people, such as their acrobatic skills.) Clint gives his blessing to Kate Bishop, a member of the Young Avengers who is a skilled archer and has adopted the name "Hawkeye." Clint is reunited with Mockingbird, who turns up alive; the "Mockingbird" who died was an alien Skrull impostor. When Steve Rogers, the original Captain America, organizes a new team of Avengers, Barton joins, reassuming the name of Hawkeye.

Hawkeye has starred in several new series, including *Hawkeye & Mockingbird* #105 (2010); *Widowmaker* #1–#4 (2010 -2011), *Hawkeye: Blindspot* #1–#4 (2011), and the five issue miniseries *The Avengers: Solo* (2011). On the silver screen, Jeremy Renner first played Hawkeye in a cameo appearance in *Thor* (2011) and returned in the role in *The Avengers* (2012).

In an age where the cosmic is commonplace, the notion of a hero armed with nothing but a bow and arrow is almost impossibly quaint, but at the same time rather refreshing. Hawkeye's combative persona may have been a blueprint for generations of dysfunctional anti-heroes, but his essential honesty and charisma will doubtless inspire future writers and readers. —*DAR & PS*

Hawkman

A regular fixture in the DC Comics universe since his inception in 1940, Hawkman has gone through many changes over the years. The



SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
STILL 10¢
The BRAVE and the BOLD presents
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JULY NO. 36
HAWKMAN
Featuring "The SHADOW-THIEF of MIDWAY CITY!"

The Brave and the Bold #36 © 1961 DC Comics. (Cover art by Joe Kubert.)

original Hawkman first appeared as a backup feature in *Flash Comics* #1 but soon graduated to cover status, alternating with the comic's other star, the Flash. Hawkman was wealthy amateur archaeologist Carter Hall, who discovers that he is actually the reincarnation of Prince Khufu, one half of a pair of legendary ancient Egyptian lovers. Searching out his long-lost love, he comes upon Shiera Saunders; their meeting reactivates their memories of the past. As a result, Hall rediscovers the secret of the "ninth metal," which he uses to make an antigravity belt, and then dons a shirtless costume, with a hawks' head mask, and giant, feathered wings. Saunders is aware of Hall's secret identity from the beginning but has to wait two years before joining her beau (and future husband) as Hawkgirl. Needless to say, she wears a shirt.

The feature was created by the prolific writer Gardner Fox, with art initially by Dennis Neville. The latter was soon replaced by Sheldon Moldoff and subsequently, after World War II, by the teenage prodigy Joe Kubert. It is often said that the character was inspired by a race of Hawkmen prominently featured in the Flash Gordon newspaper strip; true or not, the Hawkman feature proved to be quite a hit in its own right. Hawkman was soon one of the founding members of the Justice Society, later becoming its chairman, and was the only hero to star in all 57 issues of *All Star Comics*, as well as appearing in more than 100 issues of *Flash Comics.* While the concept and artwork were strong, critics have noted that the feature lacked depth and had only a few memorable villains, such as the Human Fly Bandits and the Ghost.

Along with many other DC heroes, the original Hawkman last appeared in 1951 and had to wait ten years before being revived as part of the company's Silver Age (1956–1969) explosion. The new Hawkman was showcased in six issues of *The Brave and the Bold,* in very impressive tales by the old team of Gardner Fox and Joe Kubert. After a series of backups in *Mystery in Space,* Hawkman was finally granted his own comic in 1964, though Kubert was then replaced by the elegant Murphy Anderson. As with so many other DC heroes, this new Hawkman was based in science; he was Katar Hol who, along with his wife Shayera, was a policeman from the planet Thanagar, hot on the trail of shape-changing villain Byth. Once on Earth, the pair decided to stay in Midway City, ostensibly to study local police techniques, and they soon settled down to day jobs as museum curators—in between crime-fighting capers as Hawkman and Hawkgirl.

Like their 1940s predecessors, this pair flew with the help of antigravity belts but differed in being able to talk to birds and in their predilection for ancient weapons, such as bows and arrows, borrowed from the museum. They soon amassed a colorful array of foes, such as the Shadow Thief, the IQ Gang, Matter-Master, Lion-Mane, and winged gorillas. However, when Anderson left the comic it soon ran into trouble, ending with issue #27 in 1968. Hawkman joined the Justice League of America in the mid-1960s and was a staple of the team for ten years, but he had to be satisfied with backup slots in various DC comics (and a couple of *Showcase* issues) throughout the 1970s.

From the mid-1980s on, DC Comics decided that, come what may, there should be a Hawkman comic out there—resulting in seven completely different revivals. At various points in the 1980s and 1990s, the publisher has tried to simplify the increasingly long and complex history of its main stars, often resulting in sheer confusion for their readers, and nowhere has this been more true than in the case of Hawkman. Following two revivals that pitted the Hawks against an imperialist Thanagar bent on invading Earth, a third title, *Hawkworld,* introduced a different Katar Hol, dressed in a sort of body armor. The success of this miniseries led to a regular title in the 1990s that saw the new Katar and Shayera Hol travel to Earth as escorts to the Thanagarian ambassador; they were soon exiled as traitors.

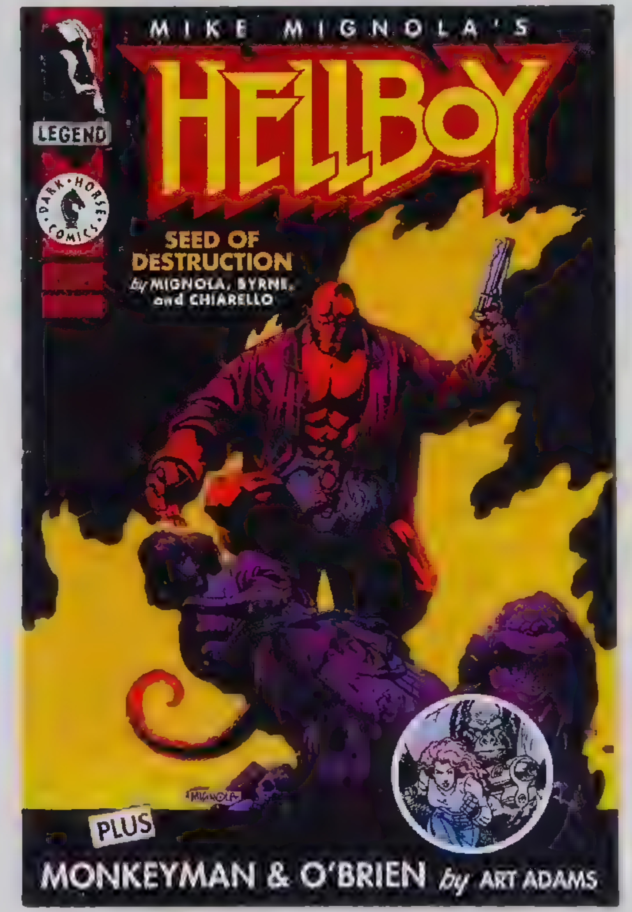
DC initially intended this Hawkman to supersede the two earlier (revived) versions—which readers were meant to ignore—but soon enough the previous, Silver Age version was back on the scene, rewritten as an impostor. Fans of the hitherto noble and upright Hawkman II had a hard time accepting him as a treacherous spy, and recent writers have tried to forget that unfortunate plot twist. In DC's *Zero Hour* series, all previous incarnations are somehow merged together; the new Carter Hall is once more a reincarnation of Prince Khufu, while his partner Kendra Saunders is somehow a reincarnation of Shiera.

Hawkman and Hawkgirl were both killed and then returned to life in the comics series *Blackest Night* (2009–2010): Hawkgirl was resurrected as Shiera, regaining the memory of all of her past lives. In September 2011, DC Comics launched a new ongoing comics series starring Carter Hall as *The Savage Hawkman,* written by Tony Daniel and drawn by Philip Tan.

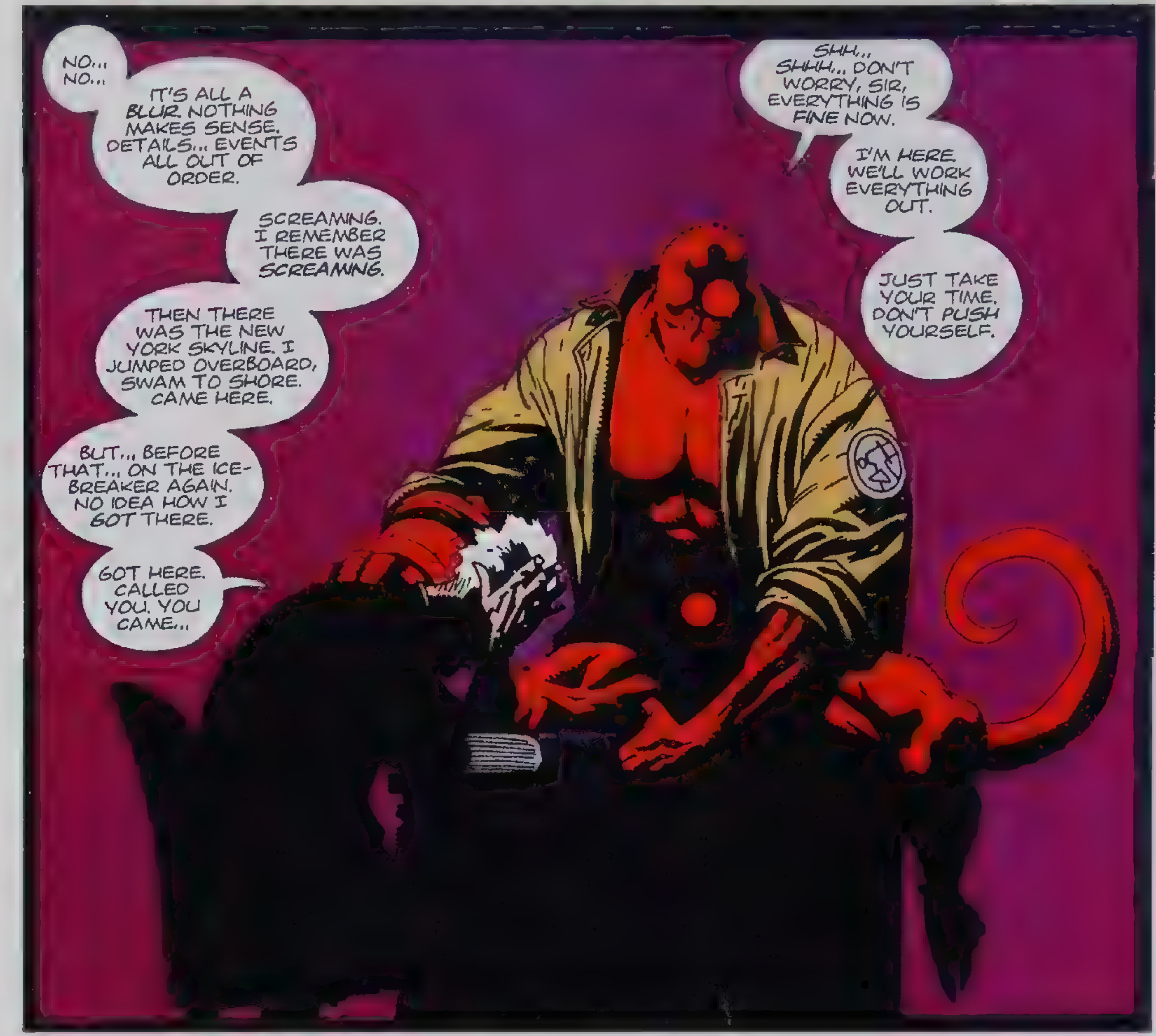
Michael Shanks portrayed Hawkman in various episodes of the live action television series *Smallville.* Hawkgirl was a regular cast member of the animated series *Justice League* and *Justice League Unlimited,* and Hawkman turned up in the latter's final season. The Golden Age version of Hawkman appeared as a member of the Justice Society in the animated *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* Warner Bros. has reportedly been developing a live action *Hawkman* movie described as "part *Indiana Jones/Da Vinci Code,* part *Ghost.*" —*DAR & PS*

Hellboy

One of the surprise hits of the 1990s, *Hellboy* mixed horror, superheroics, and the darkest of humor, spawning a mini-merchandising industry in its wake. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, creator Mike Mignola was something of a journeyman artist, flitting from title to title and slowly evolving an increasingly dark and expressive style. The emergence of Image Comics prompted Mignola, Art Adams, Frank Miller, and other artists to set up their own imprint, Legend, but not wanting to self-publish, they arranged for Dark Horse to become their distributor, while they retained ownership of their characters and their imprint. Remembering a sketch he had drawn in 1991 of a striking-looking character that he



Hellboy #1 ™ & © 1994 Michael Mignola. (Cover art by Mike Mignola.)


NO... NO...
IT'S ALL A BLUR. NOTHING MAKES SENSE. DETAILS... EVENTS ALL OUT OF ORDER.
SCREAMING. I REMEMBER THERE WAS SCREAMING.
THEN THERE WAS THE NEW YORK SKYLINE. I JUMPED OVERBOARD, SWAM TO SHORE. CAME HERE.
BUT... BEFORE THAT... ON THE ICE-BREAKER AGAIN. NO IDEA HOW I GOT THERE.
GOT HERE. CALLED YOU. YOU CAME...
SHH... SHHH... DON'T WORRY, SIR, EVERYTHING IS FINE NOW.
I'M HERE. WE'LL WORK EVERYTHING OUT.
JUST TAKE YOUR TIME. DON'T PUSH YOURSELF.

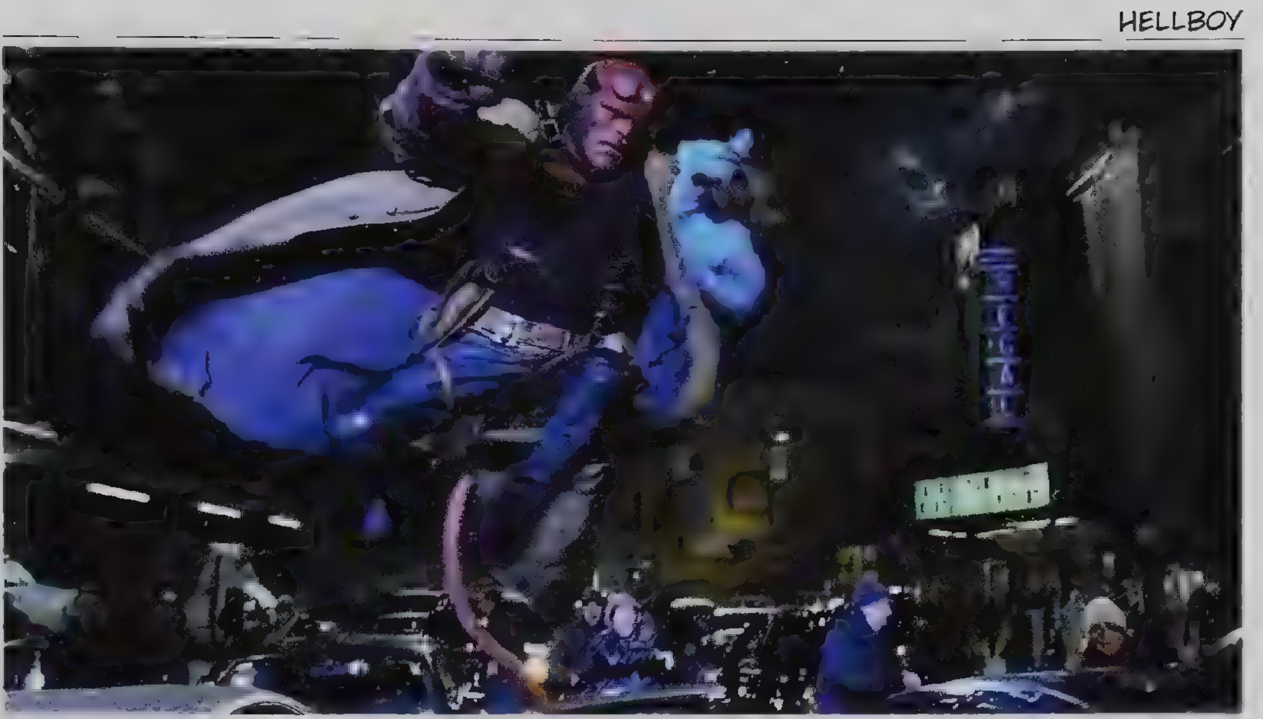
From *Hellboy* #1 ™ & © 1994 Michael Mignola.

called Hellboy, Mignola developed the concept further, and by 1993 he was ready to be unleashed.

Hellboy was first introduced to fans at the 1993 San Diego Comic-Con, in a section of a Dark Horse giveaway comic (aptly called *San Diego Con Comics*), and was exposed to a wider audience through a guest shot in John Byrne's *Next Men* title later that year. Hooking up with Byrne as scripter, Mignola brought out the first *Hellboy* comic proper in early 1994, and such was its success that the four-issue miniseries, *Hellboy: Seeds of Destruction*, has been in print ever since.

Hellboy is a large, muscular, red-skinned apparition, half man and half demon, with a tail, horns (which he regularly saws off), and a gigantic, iron-gloved right hand. Much of his background has been left deliberately obscure, but it has been revealed that, during World War II, he was summoned to Earth—as a child—by a cabal of Nazi necromancers, in a ceremony that was broken up by allied troops and mystics. Adopted by a British parapsychologist, who was killed in the first story, Hellboy grew up to be a force for good, and his constant battle against his demonic heritage has been very much a feature of the series.

As the comic has progressed, more details of his past have slipped out, including the revelation that he was born to a human mother in hell, and that he is apparently the harbinger of the Apocalypse; this he was not happy to hear. For decades, Hellboy has apparently been a member



Ron Perlman dons heavy make-up in 2008's *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*. (Universal/Dark Horse Comics / The Kobal Collection.)

of an international group of investigators, the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense (BPRD), which sends its investigators around the world to research the unknown and the terrifying. Like so many heroes of the 1990s, Hellboy breaks the tradition of the classic superhero, in that he has no alter ego, supercostume, or superheroic trademarks—save for incredible strength, which he metes out on unsuspecting criminals and villains.

The first story, spread over four issues, set the tone for the succeeding tales with its collection of monsters, haunted houses, evil magicians (in this case Rasputin), Nazis, and the threat of world destruction. This and other stories costarred Hellboy's fellow BPRD members, most notably the pyrokinetic Liz Sherman, Roger the Friendly Homunculus, and Abe Sapien, a scaled amphibian who was originally placed in suspended animation by frightened townsfolk in the nineteenth century. Other episodes have featured werewolves, pig-men, harpies, gorgons, ghosts, giant rats, demons, homunculi (man-made monsters, à la *Frankenstein*), world-destroying worms, and Nazis by the score. In fact, most of the Hellboy tales appear to involve leftover Nazis of some description or another, whether it be Nazi corpses returning from space, disembodied Nazi heads floating around, vampire Nazis, or an endless supply of deformed Nazi scientists. As outré as some of the material is, however, Mignola's mordant humor and taste for the absurd always make it eminently readable.

Mignola has released his tales sparingly in a succession of miniseries, collections, and one-shots, in yarns ranging from a few pages to the epic 1996 five-issue "Wake the Devil" story. In the process of writing the comic solo since 1995, Mignola has grown as a writer and artist, constantly paring his dialogue and art down to a striking minimalism. His *Hellboy* style is a mass of dark, menacing shapes, with figures rendered in an almost abstract way, and it has inspired many artists in its wake. Mignola always saw the series as an opportunity to combine his two great loves: the atmospheric horror milieu, full of menacing creatures, crumbling castles, and bleak locales, and the power and excitement of superhero comics. An avowed fan of legendary artist Jack Kirby, Mignola fills his strips with enormously muscular beasts engaging Hellboy in vast fight scenes, often reducing all around them to rubble.

The comic's success has led to all manner of tie-ins, crossovers, and merchandise, almost from its inception. Crossovers have included miniseries with Ghost, Batman, Starman, Savage Dragon, and the little-known Pain Killer Jane. Spin-off titles have ranged from several BPRD series to an Abe Sapien one-shot and *Hellboy Junior.* In addition, noted horror writer Christopher Golden has taken the hero in a new direction with a series of prose novels, illustrated by Mignola: *Hellboy: The Lost Army; Hellboy: Odd Jobs;* and *Hellboy: Bones of Giants.* As if all that were not enough, a bewildering amount of merchandise has tempted the devoted fan, including Hellboy caps, prints, games, lighters, calendars, watches, lunch boxes, figures, statues, and tumblers.

The first *Hellboy* live-action feature film, whose screenplay was co-written by Mignola, was released in April 2004. Directed by Guillermo del Toro, the film stars Ron Perlman as the title hero, with Selma Blair as Liz Sherman, John Hurt as Professor Trevor Brittenholm, and Doug Jones as Abe Sapien (whose voice is provided by David Hyde Pierce). Del Toro also directed the 2008 live action sequel, *Hellboy: The Golden Army,* in which Perlman, Blair, and Jones returned to their roles. There have also been two direct-to-video animated films, *Hellboy: Sword of Storms* (2006) and *Hellboy: Blood and Iron* (2007); Perlman, Blair, and Jones provide voices in both, and Hurt voices the Professor in the second.

Since its inception, *Hellboy* has consistently been one of the most influential and finely crafted titles in the shops, and Mignola is still very much at the peak of his powers. His graphic style has already influenced one major movie: Disney's *Atlantis the Lost Empire* (2001) was clearly created in the image of his strips, Mignola himself consulted on the film's overall design and background settings. With the arrival of the *Hellboy* movie, Mignola's influence in both the comic book world and American popular culture will undoubtedly grow. —*DAR & PS*

Heroes

Heroes was a popular science fiction television series concerning an ensemble of superhuman protagonists that ran on NBC for four seasons, from September 2006 to February 2010. It was created and overseen by writer/producer Tim Kring. The series shows how various individuals across the world discover that they possess superpowers. Over the course of the series, these "Heroes" come together to cope with various threats to themselves and to the world.

The major story arc in *Heroes* was called "Volumes," as if the arc was a series of graphic novels. In Vol. 1, "Genesis," in the show's first season, the individual "Heroes" discover their superhuman powers and band together to keep New York City from being destroyed by a massive explosion. This arc also introduced the Company, a covert organization that sought out superhumans. The second season, Vol. 2, "Generations," features the Heroes preventing an alternate future in which most of humanity is wiped out by the "Shanti virus." Two volumes made up Season 3: "Villains," in which dangerous superhumans escape from the Company's prison, and "Fugitives," in which one of the Heroes, politician Nathan Petrelli, initiates a government program to capture all superhumans. The final season presented Vol. 5, "Redemption," with a new villain, Samuel Sullivan, who runs a carnival of superhumans.

Among the most notable characters in *Heroes'* enormous ensemble cast was Claire Bennet (played by Hayden Panettiere), a high school student and cheerleader who can quickly regenerate any injured tissue in her body. Hence she can recover from nearly any injury she suffers with superhuman rapidity, making her virtually unkillable. The first season's catchphrase, "Save the cheerleader, save the world," refers to Claire.

Another popular Hero was Hiro Nakamura (played by Masi Oka), a young Japanese man who has the power to teleport himself over great distances, to travel in time, and to manipulate time in order to slow it down, or even to reverse the effects of time on certain objects. A comic book

The cast of the television series *Heroes* included Sendhil Ramamurthy, Tawney Cypress, Greg Grunberg, Leonard Roberts, Santiago Cabera, James Kyson Lee, Masi Oka, Milo Ventimiglia, Adrian Pasdar, Hayden Panettiere, Ali Larter, and Noah Gray-Cabey. (NBC/Universal TV / The Kobal Collection.)

fan, Hiro was the only one of the show's Heroes who saw himself as a traditional superhero, and regarded it as his duty to use his superpowers to promote the cause of good.

Other Heroes include Peter Petrelli (played by Milo Ventimiglia), a nurse and paramedic with the superhuman ability to mimic the superpowers of others that he encounters, and his brother Nathan Petrelli (played by Adrian Pasdar), a politician who can fly. Niki Sanders (played by Ali Larter) is a stripper with a multiple personality, who can manifest superhuman strength in her alternate personality of Jessica. Niki was eventually killed off, but Larter also played Niki's twin sister, Tracy Strauss, a political advisor, who can generate freezing temperatures. Gabriel Gray, alias Sylar (played by Zachary Quinto), was one of the series' leading villains. He is a serial killer who murders superhumans to analyze their brains in order to duplicate their superpowers within himself.

The title characters of *Heroes* are not superheroes according to a strict definition of the term. Although they have superhuman powers, they did not adopt heroic identities, with costumes and codenames. Moreover, they did not take on continuing missions such as crime fighting; indeed, they mostly sought to lead ordinary lives.

In its first season, *Heroes* was both a critical and popular success. There was also a weekly *Heroes* webcomic, which was collected into graphic novels published by DC Comics' WildStorm line.

However, various critics contend that *Heroes* began to lose its direction in the second season. The producers did not find a way to rework the show that would reverse the decline in ratings, and *Heroes* ended with its fourth season in 2010. *The Cape* (NBC, 2010–2011), *No Ordinary Family* (ABC, 2010–2011), and *Alphas* (SyFi, 2011–)—TV shows borrowing similar themes—debuted in its aftermath. *—PS & GM*

Heroes for Hire

A revival, continuation, and expansion of the "mercenary superhero" concept that Marvel Comics originated in 1972 with its *Luke Cage: Hero for Hire* comic, Marvel's latter-day *Heroes for Hire* series began its brief run a quarter-century later. Written by veteran comic-book fabulist John Ostrander (with the collaboration of the equally august Roger Stern on the premiere issue), with pencils by Paschalis Ferry, Scott Kolins, Martin Egeland, and Mary Mitchell, *Heroes for Hire* reunited Marvel's first "professional" superhero, Power Man (Luke Cage), with his 1970s and 1980s crime-fighting partner, the martial arts expert and "living weapon" known as Iron Fist (Danny Rand). In the fondly recalled pages of *Power Man and Iron Fist* (1978–1986), this pair of mismatched yet complementary heroes had founded Heroes for Hire, Inc., which allowed the duo, and associates such as the Daughters of the Dragon (female martial-arts adventurers Misty Knight and Colleen Wing), to make a living by selling (or as often by donating) their unique skills as bodyguards, detectives, and superpowered fighters.

Just as Marvel's editorial staff and publishing program had grown exponentially since the premiere of the original *Luke Cage* title, the superteam assembled by Stern and Ostrander for *Heroes for Hire* expanded greatly as well, bringing aboard the Hulk, Hercules (now no longer an immortal), Ant Man (Scott Lang), the Black Knight (Dane Whitman), and the White Tiger (another martial arts hero). As in its predecessor series, *Heroes for Hire* dealt with the conflict between doing good and doing well—the tension that inevitably arises between being heroic for ethical reasons and the need to keep paying the bills.

As the series unfolds, a diverse panoply of other Marvel characters strut across its stage, ranging from second-stringers such as the Golden Age (1938–1954) Human Torch (who joins the team in the second issue); Jane Foster, the human alter ego of Thor's old girlfriend (*Heroes for Hire* #5, 1997); Brother Voodoo (issue #13, 1998); She-Hulk (issue #17, 1998); Quicksilver (*Heroes for Hire/Quicksilver Annual*, 1998); and Shang-Chi, the Master of Kung Fu (issues #18–#19, 1998–1999) to such certified audience draws as the Punisher (issue #9, 1998) and the X-Men's Wolverine (issues #18–#19, 1998–

1999). One significant plot thread recounts Iron Fist's misguided effort to bring the mystical city of K'un-Lun, the place where he was raised and trained, to Earth from its native dimension. This plan could have devastated the planet, and is finally resolved in the four-issue *Iron Fist/Wolverine: The Return of K'un-Lun* miniseries (2000–2001), written by Jay Faerber and drawn by Jamal Igle.

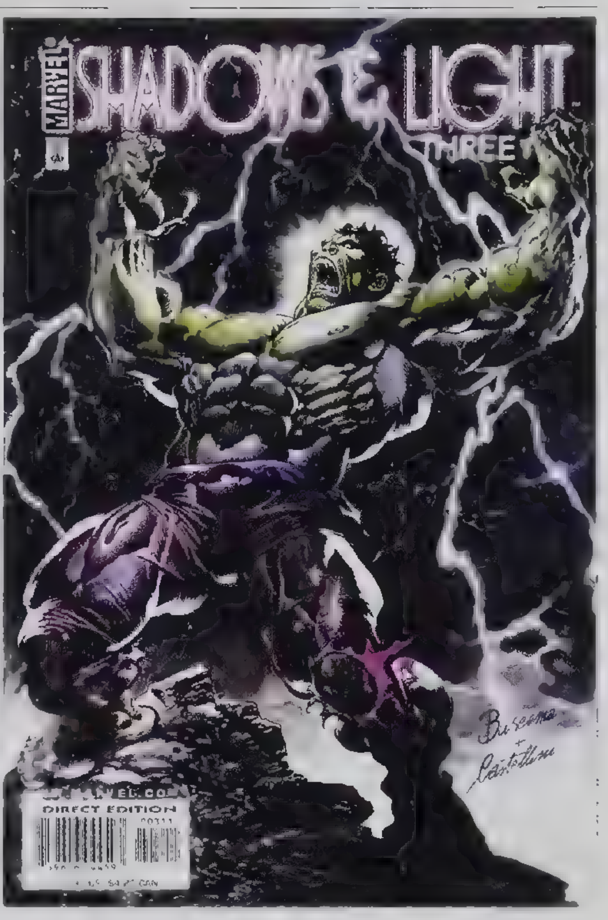
Ultimately, *Hero for Hire*'s revived super-squad-for-profit failed to click with comics audiences; the series was given its walking papers in 1999 after a mere nineteen issues. In 2006, Marvel launched a new *Heroes for Hire* series, that was originally written by the team of Jimmy Palmiotti and Justin Gray and drawn by Billy Tucci. The line-up was a mix of costumed superheroes and non-costumed adventurers, including the Black Cat, Daughters of the Dragon (Misty Knight and Colleen Wing), costumed criminal Humbug, Atlantean supervillain Orka, the mercenary Paladin, Shang-Chi, and the new female Tarantula. Humbug betrayed the team and was killed, and the group broke up.

Yet another *Heroes for Hire* series began in 2011, written by Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, with a roster initially including the Black Widow, Elektra, the Falcon, Ghost Rider (Johnny Blaze), Iron Fist, Moon Knight, Paladin, the Punisher, and the female mercenary Silver Sable. Spider-Man later joins the group. Despite the name "Heroes for Hire," this latest version of the group does not pay its members.

Nevertheless, like many real-world entrepreneurs, Power Man, Iron Fist, and many in their circle of working-stiff superheroes are no strangers to the occasional failure, series-cancellation, or even death; at some point in the future, they can be relied upon to bounce back and resume righting wrongs for love and money. —*MAM & PS*

The Hulk

During the 1950s, Marvel Comics' publishing program consisted largely of bizarre monsters with names like Googam Son of Goom, Rommbu, and Fin Fang Foom; the era represents the nadir for the marketing of superheroes. But the immediate success of Marvel's *Fantastic Four* (*FF*) series (which debuted in November 1961) heralded an epochal change in the funny book business, with costumed heroes supplanting monsters in much same the way mammals began to rule the planet after the dinosaurs died out. The FF's creators (scripter-editor Stan Lee and plotter-artist Jack Kirby) were keen to follow up on their superteam's success, but did so in a counterintuitive manner by launching a bimonthly series titled *The Incredible Hulk,* the first issue of which bears a May 1962 cover date. The Hulk, a misunderstood, superstrong creature spawned by atomic science run amok and driven by rage, is uniquely transitional between the fading era of monsters and the nascent age of superheroes.



Shadows & Light vol. 1, #3 © 1998 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by John Buscema and Claudio Castellini.)

In developing the Hulk, Lee and Kirby drew upon three principal sources. One was the Thing, the Fantastic Four's monstrous yet heroic strongman. Another was the laboratory-spawned creature from Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Franken stein* (or perhaps more precisely, the conception of him from James Whale's 1931 film version). Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) was the third. "To me," Lee explained, "[Frankenstein's] monster was the good guy. We always saw that mob of idiots with torches chasing Boris Karloff, who played the monster, up and down the hills until he went berserk, remember? He never really wanted to hurt anybody. So I figured some sort of misunderstood monster would be fun to work with." But unlike the Thing, who was a warmly regarded member of the Fantastic Four's family, the Hulk's unrestrained rage made him a permanent outsider, a fearsome creature capable of evoking humankind's most atavistic nightmares.

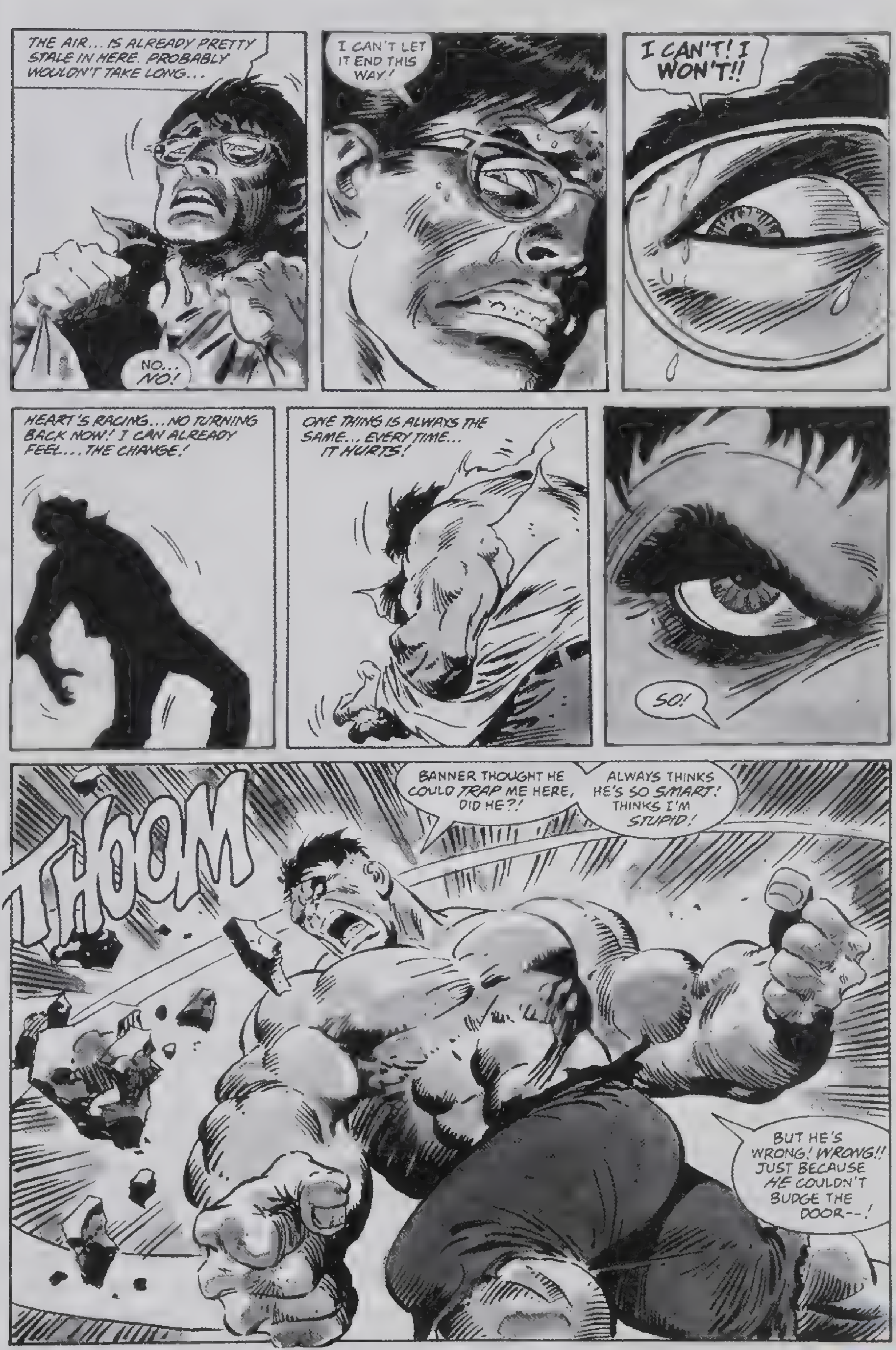
In the Hulk's premiere appearance (*The Incredible Hulk* [*IH*] #1), Lee and Kirby introduced the emotionally repressed nuclear scientist Robert Bruce Banner, inventor of the gamma bomb. When teenager Rick Jones sneaks onto the bomb's test site at New Mexico's Desert Base, Banner races into harm's way to push him into a protective trench, only to absorb a vast quantity of gamma rays when the device detonates. The irradiated Banner consequently begins making nightly transformations into a seven-foot, thousand pound, gray- (later green-) skinned monster, with virtually limitless strength and destructive capability, who embodies the darkest, angriest, and most antisocial aspects of Banner's personality. Lee saw the Hulk's ability to change back and forth between his human form and his (initially quite evil) monstrous aspect as key to the character's success. "Why couldn't a monster have a secret identity? Never done before, far as I knew. At least not in comics. It was wildly successful when Robert Louis Stevenson did it in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*"

The most important members of the series' supporting cast are in place from the very beginning: Air Force General Thaddeus E. "Thunderbolt" Ross, who oversees security at Desert Base and despises Banner, whom he loudly disparages as a gutless "milksop"; Betty Ross, Thunderbolt's mousy daughter, who (despite being oppressed by her overbearing father) is in love with Banner; and Rick Jones, the only one (at first) to become aware of Banner's dual nature, who aids the tortured scientist by helping to limit the amount of havoc the Hulk can wreak in a world that fears and hates the creature. All of these characters were destined to endure for decades.

But the Hulk's first comic book series was somewhat less fortunate; it lasted only six issues before being canceled. Fortunately, audiences were sufficiently intrigued with the title character to justify his continued guest appearances in other Marvel titles. During his early visits to the pages of *The Fantastic Four* (vol. 1 #12, 1963; vol. 1 #25–#26, 1964) the Hulk invariably fights that group's almost-as-strong Thing, and also crosses paths with Spider-Man in the wall-crawler's own title (*The Amazing Spider-Man* vol. 1 #14, 1964). The Hulk even becomes a charter member of another Lee-Kirby superhero team, the Avengers (*The Avengers* vol. 1 #1, 1963), alongside Ant-Man, Iron Man, Thor, and the Wasp. Not a "team player" by nature, the Hulk leaves the inchoate organization in the series' second issue. Thanks to reader reaction to his sporadic guest appearances, the Hulk garnered a regular feature in *Tales to Astonish,* beginning in issue #60 (1964). After sharing the title, first with Giant-Man and later with the Sub-Mariner, the Hulk eventually took over the magazine completely. With issue #102 (1968), the title was permanently rechristened *The Incredible Hulk.*

The characterization and appearance of the Hulk have undergone numerous changes since the character's inception, and these transformations began almost immediately. In his debut appearance (though not in many reprints of the same), the creature has gray skin. "Unfortunately," Lee recalled, "in our first issue the printer had trouble keeping the shade of gray consistent from page to page. On some pages his skin was light gray, on others it was dark gray, and on some it looked black. Too confusing. So for the next issue I changed his skin color to green, a color the printer had less trouble with. Although it was done on a whim, it turned out to be a fortu-

From *Shadows & Light* vol. 1, #3 © 1998 Marvel Comics.


THE AIR... IS ALREADY PRETTY STALE IN HERE. PROBABLY WOULDN'T TAKE LONG...
NO... NO!
I CAN'T LET IT END THIS WAY!
I CAN'T! I WON'T!!
HEART'S RACING... NO TURNING BACK NOW! I CAN ALREADY FEEL... THE CHANGE!
ONE THING IS ALWAYS THE SAME... EVERY TIME... IT HURTS!
SO!
THOOM
BANNER THOUGHT HE COULD TRAP ME HERE, DID HE?!
ALWAYS THINKS HE'S SO SMART! THINKS I'M STUPID!
BUT HE'S WRONG! WRONG!! JUST BECAUSE HE COULDN'T BUDGE THE DOOR--!

itous choice because it gave rise to many memorable nicknames for me to employ, such as the Jolly Green Giant, Ol' Greenskin, the Green Goliath, etc."

During the Hulk's Lee-Kirby run, the mechanics of Banner's metamorphosis into the Hulk—during which Banner initially retains his intellect, though his personality becomes warped and evil—also changed fairly early in the character's history. By issue #4 of the first series (November 1962), Jones is helping Banner to trigger his transformations by means of a focused gamma ray beam, which enables the Hulk to fight assorted villains (Tyrannus; General Fang) and invading aliens (Mongu, the gladiator from space; the Metal Master), whenever the need arises. In late 1960s *Tales to Astonish* stories, Banner begins morphing into the Hulk whenever he is roused to extreme anger rather than because of the arrival of nightfall. Throughout the Hulk's first series, his speech contains none of the dumbed-down "Hulk Smash!" locutions that distinguish the character's run in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Initially his language has more of a blue-collar, almost Archie Bunker–like quality (he even calls an attacking soldier a "meathead" in the first series' fifth issue).

As his post–*Tales to Astonish* series progressed, the Hulk's secret identity became common knowledge, and the Green Goliath was increasingly portrayed (by such scribes as Gary Friedrich, Bill Everett, Roy Thomas, Archie Goodwin, and such illustrators as Marie Severin and Herb Trimpe) as a misunderstood, childlike creature of diminished intellectual capacity and limited vocabulary (like Lenny from John Steinbeck's 1937 novel *Of Mice and Men*), who turns his prodigious strength to mindless destruction most often when hounded by foes such as "Thunderbolt" Ross, who frequently pits the full fury of the United States military against him. And although he is often given to temper tantrums set off by relatively minor provocations, the Hulk can also be peaceful and gentle when left alone, a status he enjoys only rarely. This characterization strikes a sharp contrast to the Hulk's first appearances, in which he appears to be evil and remorseless in his desire to attack humanity; the destruction this middle-period Hulk causes is actually more incidental than intentional. Underlying the Hulk's rage is a theme of mutual emotional repression—with Banner's personality attempting to hold the Hulk in check, and vice versa—that pervades the series from its beginning. Countless scenes depicting the Hulk methodically pounding his way through impregnable walls relentlessly drive the emotional-repression metaphor home.

An artifact of Cold War–era nuclear anxieties, the gamma rays that created the Hulk also spawned some of the Jade Giant's most enduring adversaries and allies. *Tales to Astonish* #90 (1967) served up foreign spy Emil Blonsky, whose exposure to gamma rays transforms him into the Abomination, a green-skinned, superstrong being who resembles a muscle-bound version of the Creature from the Black Lagoon. As criminally oriented as the Hulk is innocent, the Abomination's subsequent slugfests with the Green Goliath are legion. *IH* #115 (1969) introduced uneducated janitor Samuel Sterns; thanks to gamma rays, Sterns' unrequited desire to be a genius manifested in his transformation into the green-skinned, giant-brained, would-be world-conqueror known as the Leader, another one of the Hulk's long-term foes. Psychologist Leonard Samson subsequently tries to end Banner's transformations into the Hulk by siphoning off some of his body's gamma radiation, and uses it to turn himself into a green-haired, superstrong being (*IH* #141, 1971). For many years, "Doc" Samson continues studying and psychoanalyzing Banner and the Hulk (whom he is sometimes forced to fight) in an unsuccessful effort to find a permanent cure for Banner's affliction.

In one of the most poignant chapters in the life of Marvel's misunderstood man-monster, the Hulk enters the subatomic world of K'ai (*IH* #140, 1971), a realm inhabited by green-skinned humanoids who are ruled by the benevolent Princess Jarella. Here the Hulk finds not only the acceptance he craves (the K'aians regard him as a great hero, not a monster), but also the love of Jarella. Best of all, he manages to retain the intellect and emotions of Banner, while using the Hulk's prodigious strength to protect Jarella and her people from various cosmic menaces. This

The 2003 film version of *The Hulk* was directed by Ang Lee. (Universal/Marvel Entertainment / The Kobal Collection.)

storyline, a product of the fertile minds of fantasist Harlan Ellison and veteran comics writer Roy Thomas, ends with the Hulk/Banner mourning Jarella's death, and inspired later Hulk writers—such as John Byrne in the 1980s and Peter David in the 1990s—to alter the balance between Banner's and the Hulk's personalities, often to tremendous dramatic effect.

With the premiere issue of *Marvel Feature* (December 1971), the Hulk once again tests his misanthropic tendencies by joining a superhero group, the misfit "non-team" known as the Defenders. In addition to the Hulk, the group initially consisted of Doctor Strange and the Sub-Mariner (another outsider who has nearly as antagonistic a relationship with the rest of humanity as does the Hulk). After four issues of *Marvel Feature*, the supergroup moved into its own bimonthly series (*The Defenders* vol. 1 #1, 1972). The Hulk drifted in and out of this loose agglomeration of heroes until its dissolution in 1986, and returned to the group when it reformed years later, in 2001.

During the Hulk's first two decades, all of his writers kept Banner and the Hulk essentially separate from one another, at least in a psychological sense; no serious, sustained attempt was made to explore the deep connections between these two personalities. Then, in stories that began running in the large-format *Rampaging Hulk* magazine (January 1977–June 1981, known simply as *The Hulk* from the tenth issue forward), writer Doug Moench posited that Banner suffered from multiple personality disorder. Hulk scribes Roger Stern and Peter B. Gillis bolstered this theory by contending that the Hulk and Banner are entirely different creatures who happen to occupy the same body (*IH* #227, 1978). This take on the Hulk changed radically with writer Bill Mantlo's revelation (*IH* #312, 1985) that the Hulk's rage comes not from gamma rays but from the beatings that Banner received from his alcoholic, abusive father during childhood. After Banner's exposure to the gamma bomb, the authoritarian General Ross naturally becomes a lightning rod for the scientist's deep well of repressed anger toward his father. This development made possible some of the most affecting and psychologically complex Hulk stories ever penned, and resonated well with the larger culture's growing interest in the so-called "recovery movement,"usually without venturing too far into maudlin whining or touchy-feely New Age excesses.

One of the highlights of writer-artist John Byrne's brief stint on the series (beginning in *IH* #314, 1985) is Banner and the Hulk being split into independent entities in two separate bodies, thereby shining a new light on the original Lee/Kirby Jekyll-and-Hyde concept. Unshackled from Banner's emotional restraint, the Hulk becomes a complete lunatic, more dangerous than ever before. Freed of the capricious rages of the Hulk, Banner finally marries Betty Ross, despite the attempts of her father (who has become demented by his encounters with the Hulk) to kill him. But Banner's connubial bliss is short-lived; Byrne's successor, writer Allen Milgrom, quickly placed both the man and the monster back into a single body, finishing up 1986 with a battle royal between the newly reconstituted green Hulk and the original gray Hulk.

The Hulk arguably received his most riveting portrayals—and underwent some of his most significant changes—during Peter David's lengthy writing tenure, which began in *IH* #328 (February 1987) and ended with issue #467 (August 1998). Among the many highlights of David's run is Banner's metamorphosis into the gray Hulk, who becomes a Las Vegas mob enforcer known as Joe Fixit, a latter-day Mr. Hyde in an Armani suit. This persona combines Banner's intelligence with the Hulk's strength, while freeing Banner from his inhibition against using violence and trickery—the main tools of a gangster's trade. David (working with such artists as Todd McFarlane, John Ridgway, and Dale McKeown) built upon Mantlo's multiple-personality concept by exploring three distinct personalities: Banner, who despite his emotional scars is capable of experiencing a loving relationship with Betty; the intelligent, scheming gray Hulk, who represses all of his "softer" emotions; and the raging child represented by the traditional green-skinned Hulk. Doc Samson even succeeds in integrating these three personalities into a single being, a sophisticated, intelligent superhero—neither a rampaging brute nor a geeky scientist—who becomes the leader of a supergroup called the Pantheon (*IH* #400, 1992). David's *Hulk* is also memorable for its clever, incisive dialogue.

In *The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect* (two issues, December 1992 and January 1993), David created a grim, post-apocalyptic future Earth, where the Hulk meets the Maestro, his future self, who is also the ruler of this dystopian world. Like the Leader, the Maestro had used guile and intelligence, rather than brute strength, to conquer the human race; the Hulk sees the Maestro as a cautionary wake-up call, a warning that he might become as hateful as his father unless he is very careful. After returning to the present, the Hulk becomes increasingly fearful of becoming the Maestro; consequently, when he becomes angry he turns into plain, powerless Bruce Banner, whose impotent tantrums symbolize the Hulk's latest take on emotional repression (IH #426, 1995). No longer an emotionally stable superhero, the Hulk (with Betty, now his wife, at his side) once again becomes a fugitive, hiding out in small towns all over America. During this period, Betty completes a transformation of her own, evolving from a helpless damsel to be rescued, to a young bride mourning Banner's miscarried child, to an independent, self-actualized woman. Unfortunately, at the end of the 1990s she contracts gamma-radiation poisoning because of years of close proximity to Banner and ultimately dies at the gamma-mutated hands of the Abomination.

Although his long-running series concluded with issue #474 (March 1999), the Jade Giant returned to prominence a month later with a new monthly title (*Hulk* #1), following the creative vision of John Byrne for the first seven issues. As the series unfolds (with stories from such writers as Paul Jenkins, Fabian Nicieza, Sean McKeever, and Christopher Priest, and the illustrative talents of John Romita Jr., Kyle Hotz, Joe Bennett, and Jon Bogdanove), Banner must contend with a new incarnation of the Hulk that represents his intense guilt over Betty's death. This soon leads to the emergence of the "Devil Hulk," a purely evil Hulk who tries to use Banner's illness to gain control of the scientist's body; subsequently, Banner learns that each of his transformations into the Hulk creates an entirely new personality, upping the ante on his multiple personality disorder by a factor of thousands. In the 2000s, the series was simplified and revitalized again with an ominous, film noir-ish treatment by writer Bruce Jones.

In the "Planet Hulk" storyline (2006) written by Greg Pak, The Illuminati, a council of leading superheroes including Mr. Fantastic, Iron Man, and others, having decided that the Hulk presents too great a danger to Earth, trap him in a spaceship to send him to a distant planet that is devoid of intelligent life. But their plans go awry, and the spacecraft instead crashes on an inhabited planet, Sakaar. There the Hulk is initially enslaved, but he leads a revolt against the Red King, and becomes Sakaar's emperor. The Hulk even marries a woman named Caiera, who becomes pregnant.

In the limited series *World War Hulk* (2007), the spaceship that brought the Hulk to Sakaar blows up, killing Caiera and millions of others. Overcome with rage, the Hulk returns to Earth and attacks Manhattan, seeking revenge on the Illuminati, whom he blames for the disaster. But it turns out that it was the Red King's followers who caused the spaceship to explode. The Hulk is finally defeated and is imprisoned in his Bruce Banner form.

Thanks to his alien biology, the Hulk's unborn son Skaar survived Caiera's death, emerged from a cocoon, and rapidly grew to adulthood, First appearing in *World War Hulk* #5 (January 2008), Skaar then starred in the limited series *Skaar, Son of Hulk* (2008–2009).

The Hulk's perennial nemesis General "Thunderbolt" Ross was recently transformed into a similar monster, the Red Hulk, first appearing in that form in the first issue of a new *Hulk* Vol. 2 series (January 2008). The Red Hulk joined the Avengers in 2011. Betty Ross was resurrected and underwent a similar transformation, becoming the Red She-Hulk, first appearing in that form in *Hulk* Vol. 2 #15 (September 2009).

THE HULK AS A MEDIA FRANCHISE

Since the demise of the live-action *Incredible Hulk* television series show starring Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno (1978–1982, CBS), Universal Studios had put a feature film on the development slate. Finally, in 2001, Academy Award–winning director Ang Lee came onboard to direct the *Hulk* project, with both himself and James Schamus working on the script. With the part of the Hulk to be completely realized using computer-generated imagery (CGI), casting began on the other leading roles. Australian actor Eric Bana gained the part of Bruce Banner, while Jennifer Connelly took her second comic-book role (after *The Rocketeer*) as Betty Ross. Sam Elliott and Josh Lucas played the parts of General Ross and Major Talbot, while Nick Nolte was written into the role of Bruce's father, David Banner. Even Stan Lee and Lou Ferrigno were given cameo sequences. On March 18, 2002, filming began, and the $120 million film was released on June 20, 2003, to great fanfare.

Audiences were pleased at the realism of the CGI Hulk, at the comic-book-style visuals, and of the surprise element that Bruce's father became the (unnamed) Absorbing Man. Less enthusiasm greeted the glacial pace of the film, the moody drama, the silly "Hulk dogs" that menaced Betty and the Hulk at one point, and the incomprehensible ending battle. Still, *The Hulk* won its opening weekend with a $62 million box office take. It plummeted during its second weekend, though it did pass the $100 million mark. Overseas reactions and box office business were mixed, but were enough to propel the film to over $200 million worldwide, prior to its October 2003 DVD release. In addition, the film spun off a million-dollar merchandising campaign, with *Hulk* tie-in books, games, action figures, noise-making "Hulk fists," and assorted sundries hitting the marketplace in stride. In traditional Hulk fashion, the green giant even offered, "Bones no break when Hulk drink milk," for the popular "got milk?" ad campaign.

Doubtless because of dissatisfaction with the Ang Lee film, the 2008 movie *The Incredible Hulk* had a different director and lead actors. Louis Leterrier was this film's director, and the new cast included Edward Norton as Bruce Banner, Liv Tyler as Betty Ross, and William Hurt as General "Thunderbolt" Ross. Tim Roth plays Emil Blonsky, the character who mutates into the evil Abomination. The changes paid off, and this film grossed more money than Ang Lee's version.

The Hulk returned onscreen in the 2012 film *The Avengers*, this time with Mark Ruffalo playing Bruce Banner. Appropriately, Lou Ferrigno, television's Hulk, provides the voice of the Hulk in both *The Incredible Hulk* and *The Avengers*.

Over more than four decades, Banner and the Hulk have received widely varying interpretations as each successive creative team reinvents them to suit the evolving sensibilities of comics audiences. Through all of these nonstop, manifold changes, the essential purity of the Hulk's dual nature—the eternal tension between rationality and emotion, the endless twilight struggle between the id and the superego—remains archetypally clear and literarily valid. The series will certainly continue to grow, develop, and fascinate for decades to come. *—MAM, AM & PS*

The Human Torch

The Human Torch was one of the "big three" heroes of Marvel (then known as Timely) Comics, along with Captain America and the Sub-Mariner—and one of the most popular Marvel superheroes of the 1940s. Like the Sub-Mariner, he was first seen on the newsstands in *Marvel Comics* #1, in late 1939. Historians believe that the Sub-Mariner came first and that the Torch was created by Carl Burgos as a counterpart to his friend Bill Everett's aquatic hero. Both artists worked in the Funnies Inc. sweatshop and were among several creators involved in packaging together the first of a new comic line for pulp publisher Martin Goodman. The comic, and particularly the Torch and Sub-Mariner characters, proved a hit, and Timely soon grew to become one of the era's biggest companies, eventually emerging as the Marvel Comics that readers know today.

As the story in *Marvel Comics* #1 reveals, the Torch is an android created by Professor Phineas T. Horton, which accidentally bursts into flames when exposed to oxygen (due to a design flaw). Disappointed by his failure, Horton buries the poor creature in a glass tomb and sinks it in concrete. But when an explosion accidentally releases the Torch, he rampages through a nearby town, causing chaos wherever he goes. Befriended by a crook called Sardo, the Torch is lured into a life of crime until rescued by Horton, who has his own agenda. Seeing that the Torch can now control his flame, Horton plans to exploit the Torch's powers for his own gain. Disgusted by the professor's greed, the Torch heads off on his own, to right injustices wherever he encounters them; and he soon signs up as a member of the police department (adopting the alter ego Jim Hammond, though this temporary device is not well-remembered today), rushing to the scene of any crime or disaster.

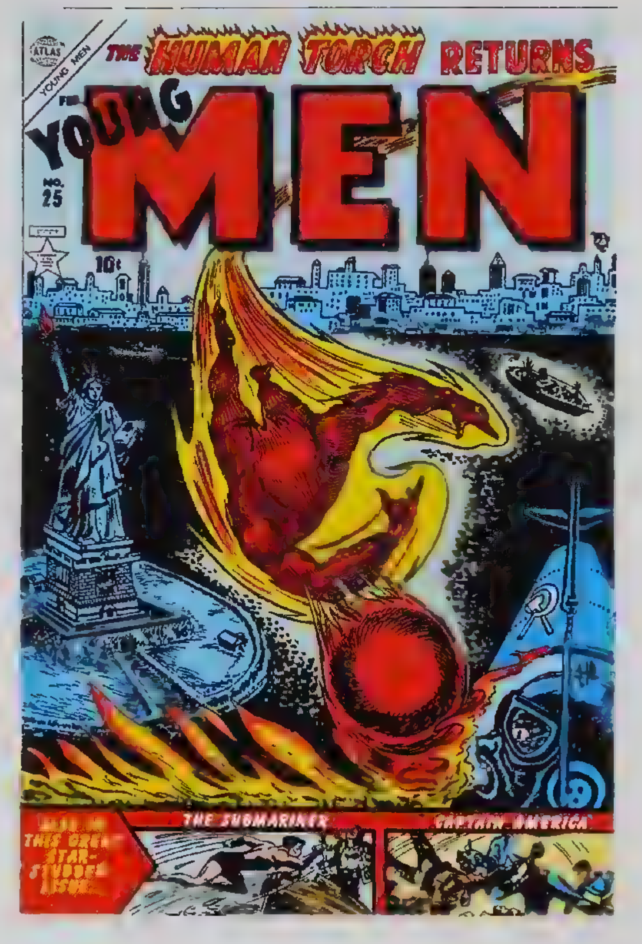
Although he had no tool or weapons to speak of, and his scant bodysuit costume disappeared when he ignited into flames, the Torch's persona as a red-hot flame intrigued readers. He could melt bullets shot his way, fly, and create ropes of flame and fireballs to subdue even the most dastardly ne'er-do-wells. In his Torch persona, the hero was unaffected by electricity and explosions, although the force of a powerful blast was known to knock him over. His number one vulnerability, of course, was water.

In 1939, the superhero was still a very new concept and only nine heroes preceded the Torch and Sub-Mariner, many of them (Wonder Man, the Green Mask, the Masked Marvel) eminently forgettable. So Timely's pair made a massive impact. The Torch's regular spot in *Marvel Mystery Comics* (the new name for *Marvel Comics*) was soon joined by his own quarterly solo title, and as the United States entered World War II, the Axis-smashing Torch began to pop up elsewhere as well. Between 1939 and 1949, the Torch starred in almost 300 adventures, in such titles as *All Winners, Daring, All-Select, Captain America,* and *Mystic Comics*—almost tying Captain America for the greatest number of stories published for a 1940s Marvel hero.

For *Human Torch* #1, Burgos created a junior sidekick for the hero (possibly inspired by the recent emergence of Robin in *Detective Comics*), a young counterpart called Toro, the Flaming Kid. Following the death of his parents in a train crash, Toro was adopted by a circus fire-eating act that had discovered that he could control fire and was unharmed by it. When the Torch happened upon him, they teamed up, and Toro eventually moved in with his mentor as his ward. The pair became inseparable for the rest of the strip's run. Toro later went on to join the Young Allies, who starred in twenty issues of their own comic as well as a lengthy run in *Kid Komics*.

The war was a boost to Timely/Marvel's heroes and they were among the first to take the fight to the Axis powers. While the Torch never really developed any arch-enemies, he was constantly battling the Nazis and Japanese, in between rooting out spy rings and racketeers. Another innovative feature of the Human Torch strip was his many battles with his co-star and rival the Sub-Mariner. The first of these appeared in *Marvel Mystery Comics* #8. The pair's longest battle stretched to an astonishing sixty pages (in *Human Torch* #5) and ranged across the whole planet, taking in Axis plots and vast warring armies. Burgos, Everett, and their Funnies Inc. colleagues would hole themselves up in hotel rooms and work for days on end, churning out these mammoth tales, to meet their fans' insatiable demand. While sometimes crude, these epics have an incredible energy and dynamism to them that still excites today.

Burgos was drafted, in 1942, and other creators were brought in to take over his work, including artists Harry Sahle and Don Rico and a promising young writer named Mickey Spillane. After the war, Burgos contributed a few new tales but the strip was in decline and, in mid-1949, *Human Torch Comics* suffered the indignity of being transformed into *Love Tales*. Not even the late innovation of replacing Toro with a female assistant—the light ray–emitting Sun Girl—could halt the sudden collapse of the superhero market. Marvel concentrated on romance, war, and horror comics until the mid-1950s, when they evidently felt that the time was right for a revival of their heroic stars. *Young Men* #24 (December 1953) starred all the big three, with the Torch as cover star, and reintroduced the heroes to a new audience.



Young Men #25 © 1953 Atlas. (Cover art by Carl Burgos.)

The Torch, it seems, had been covered by a flame-retardant solution and buried in the desert by "the crime boss" until he was freed by a nuclear test blast five years later. Toro had been captured and brainwashed by the Koreans, and the Torch's first task was to free him from their control. Together again at last, the pair took up from where they had left off, tackling organized crime (and bashing the occasional "red" in the process). Their resurrection led to the revival of the Torch's own comic and to appearances—many by Burgos—in further issues of *Young Men, Sub-Mariner, Captain America,* and *Men's Adventures,* but within a year the Torch was canceled once again.

When, in 1961, fans next discovered a comic starring the Human Torch on the stands (*Fantastic Four* #1), it was a totally different Torch, Johnny Storm. Following DC Comics' success with its new superhero line, Martin Goodman decided that the time was right for his own company to reenter the genre, and when writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby set about dreaming up a new title, someone clearly remembered the first Torch's success. Although Johnny Storm is an integral member of the Fantastic Four, he has rarely enjoyed solo success; his main ventures outside the group have been an early run in *Strange Tales* (issues #101–#134) in the early 1960s (one episode of which was drawn by Burgos), and a solo series targeted at young readers that flared up in 2003. In 2011, Johnny Storm was seemingly killed off, but it is surely inevitable that he will eventually turn up alive.

Fans had not quite seen the last of the original Human Torch and Toro, however. The first Torch reappeared to fight the new version in the 1966 *Fantastic Four Annual,* having been reactivated by the Mad Thinker, while Toro made an appearance in *Sub-Mariner* #14. Sadly, both died. However, over in the *Avengers* comic, the evil robot Ultron acquired the Torch's remains and took them off to Prof. Horton (who had actually been killed off back in 1939; but clearly, no one at Marvel remembered that). Horton then managed to fix the flaw that had caused his creation to self-immolate. Using the new, improved android, Ultron fashioned a new superbeing—the Vision—who soon became an Avenger, as chronicled in *Avengers* #57 and #58 (though his synthetic lineage was not fully revealed until #135, as part of a time-travel saga that also brought the original Torch and his later self face-to-face).

Writer and comics historian Roy Thomas always had a fondness for the first Torch, and in 1975 created *The Invaders* to recount further wartime adventures of the Timely Comics "big three" (including Captain America and Sub-Mariner, and adding Toro and Captain America's sidekick Bucky to the group). That title's cancellation, in 1979, might have marked the last hurrah for the first Torch. But one should never say never where marketable properties are concerned, and by the late 1980s continuity had been revised so that the original Torch had not been transformed into the Vision and could fly again, first as a member of the West Coast Avengers and later with the Heroes for Hire. Writer Kurt Busiek further amended continuity in *Avengers Forever* (1998–1999), establishing that due to a time paradox, the Vision had indeed been constructed from the original Torch's body, yet the Torch himself continued to exist as a separate being.

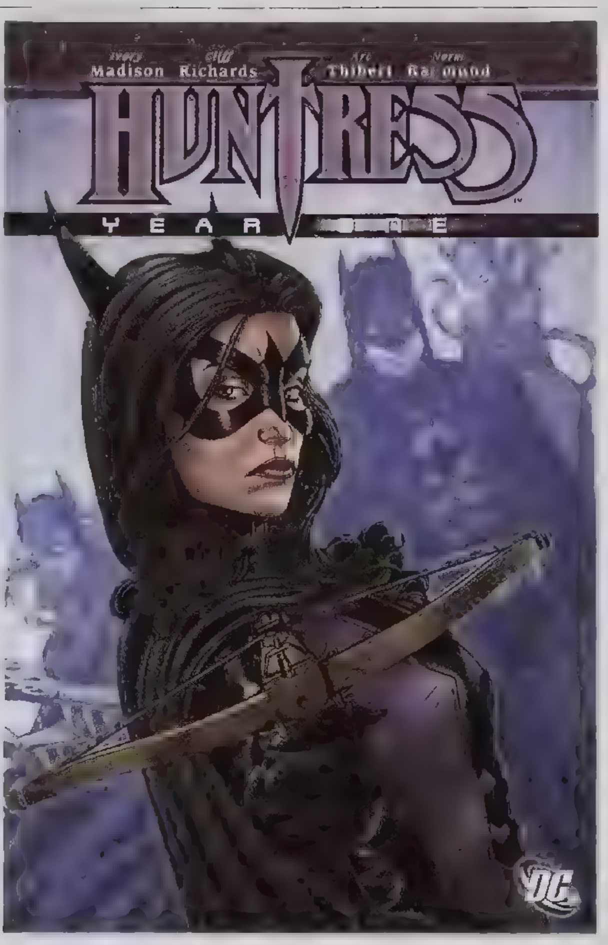
The Torch joined the contemporary team, the New Invaders, but sacrificed his life to save his teammates. Toro was resurrected by the all-powerful Cosmic Cube in *Avengers/Invaders* #12 (August 2009). In the limited series *The Torch* (2009–2010), the Mad Thinker resurrects the original Human Torch, who is reunited with Toro. Thus it was, that the original Human Torch, one of the very first "Marvels," triumphantly returned to the pages of Marvel Comics in time for the seventieth anniversary of both the company and his own debut in *Marvel Comics* #1. *—DAR & PS*

The Huntress

Borrowing her name from a relatively obscure Golden Age villainess, the heroic Huntress first appeared on "Earth-Two"—the parallel world onto which the 1940s incarnations of DC Comics' characters had been relegated—in *All-Star Comics* #69 (1977). Envisioned by writer Paul Levitz and artist Joe Staton as the Earth-Two Batgirl, the Huntress is more intriguingly distinguished by her parentage: She is Helena Wayne, the daughter of millionaire Bruce (Batman) Wayne and rehabilitated criminal Selina (Catwoman) Kyle. Helena had recently graduated law school when a former associate of Catwoman's black mails Kyle back into her feline guise for a heist. Catwoman perishes in a consequent conflict, leading her traumatized husband to burn his cape and cowl in a grim funeral pyre, retiring his Batman identity. Helena swears vengeance against her mother's killer, taking a vow that eerily mirrors her father's some decades prior, and becomes the Huntress, a violet-and-black-clad crime fighter who carries on the traditions of her parents with athletic prowess and crossbow in tow. The Huntress so enthralled DC readers fascinated by the heroine's lineage and motivation that she spun out of *All-Star Comics* into a successful backup series in *Wonder Woman*, until being defeated by an unstoppable menace: Continuity revision. In 1985, DC Comics streamlined its multiple worlds and their respective character variations in its highly acclaimed twelve-issue series *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Since that series eliminated the Earth-Two Batman, the Huntress was also erased from comics reality.

But the character was too popular to fully jettison from the DC universe, and in April 1989 was reintroduced in *The Huntress* #1. During her childhood, Mafia princess Helena Rosa Bertinelli's family, a Gotham City crime cartel, was executed in a syndicate hit. The sole surviving Bertinelli, Helena forsakes her gangland roots and takes up a quest to dismantle organized crime as the Huntress, aiming her crossbow at the city's mobsters. By day, she works as a teacher, further toiling to undo some of the damage caused by her family ties.

The Huntress' brutal (but nonlethal) methods attracted the attention of Batman, who initially regarded her as yet another plague on the streets of Gotham, but after several encounters the Dark Knight accepted her as an ally. *The Huntress* was canceled after nineteen issues, but the heroine has maintained a profile through numerous guest appearances in other Batman titles, a membership stint in the Justice League, the issuance of several action figures, and a partnership with Oracle and Black Canary as the Birds of Prey. The Huntress even tangled with Twentieth Century Fox's murderous movie monster in the Dark Horse Comics/DC Comics four-issue crossover comic *Batman vs. Predator II: Bloodmatch* (1995) and was revisited at the hands of writer Ivory Madison in *Huntress: Year One* (2009), which tells the superheroine's origin story.



Huntress: Year One © and ™ 2009 DC Comics. (Cover art by Cliff Richards.)

The Huntress has also ventured onto the small screen. Actress Barbara Joyce played the character in two 1979 *Legends of the Super-Heroes* live-action comedy specials airing on NBC, also starring Adam West as Batman and Burt Ward as Robin. In 2002, a short-lived *Birds of Prey* series ran on the WB network, including in its cast Ashley Scott as the Huntress. While this program adapted the contemporary *Birds of Prey* comic book into episodic television form, it borrowed the Huntress' heritage from the Earth-Two comic-book incarnation, as evidenced by the show's tagline: "Batman's Little Girl Is All Grown Up." She has also appeared in animation in both *Justice League Unlimited* and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. *—ME & GM*

Image Comics Heroes

The early 1990s was a watershed period for the creators of Marvel Comics' highest-profile titles. Comic book artists, who often also wrote their material—such as Todd McFarlane (*Spider-Man*), Erik Larsen (*Amazing Spider-Man; Spider-Man*), Jim Lee (*X-Men; Uncanny X-Men*), Rob Liefeld (*X-Factor; X-Force*), Whilce Portacio (*Longshot; Punisher; Uncanny X-Men; X-Factor*), Marc Silvestri (*Uncanny X-Men; Wolverine*), and Jim Valentino (*Guardians of the Galaxy*)—generated unprecedented sales. Riding a wave of success with characters owned by Marvel, these graphic *auteurs* left the company in 1992, joining forces to form Image Comics, a company dedicated to publishing creator-owned properties, principally in the comics industry's dominant superhero genre.

During their tenures at Marvel, the Image founders had often felt constrained by corporate editorial edicts; under the Image banner, however, they had free reign to control and develop their own characters, taking them in whatever direction they saw fit. As the 1990s progressed, the fledgling company prospered and its line expanded, successfully weathering the comics industry's mid-decade sales slump. Today, Image Comics remains a serious competitor to both Marvel and DC Comics, the two publishing houses that had for decades dominated the comic book business.

At its inception, Image was the home of several distinct comics publishing ventures, including Todd McFarlane's Todd McFarlane Productions (TMP), Marc Silvestri's Top Cow Productions, and Jim Lee's WildStorm Productions. Solely owned by McFarlane, TMP still publishes *Spawn* and its spin-off titles today.

Arguably, Image's most successful title, *Spawn*—which recounts the story of a murdered soldier (Al Simmons) who is resurrected as the commander of the armies of hell—began publication in 1992. Despite the hero's rather derivative appearance (Spawn appears to have raided the attics of Spider-Man, Dr. Strange, the Punisher, and Lobo when he assembled his costume), the title's overemphasis on ultraviolence, and its elevation of McFarlane's faddish, extreme art-style over story, *Spawn* was an immediate hit among comics readers and collectors. The series gave rise to a feature film (starring Michael Jai as the macabre hell-warrior) in 1997, developed into an Emmy Award–winning HBO animated series (1997–1999), and birthed a line of collectible action figures from McFarlane's own toy company (McFarlane Toys). *Spawn* also engendered a pair of spin-off comics series: *Hellspawn* (the tale of a version of Spawn even meaner than the original one) and *Sam & Twitch* (a pair of urban detectives investigating the supernatural in a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* meets *NYPD Blue* milieu).

Top Cow is wholly owned by Image partner Marc Silvestri, and publishes such titles as *Battle of the Planets, Delicate Creatures, Midnight Nation, Rising Stars, Fathom, Tomb Raider* (based upon the popular action-oriented video game and film property), and *Witchblade* (an occult-themed female action heroine, stylistically reminiscent of Marvel's Elektra, and the subject of a successful TNT television series).

The rest of Image's voluminous superhero output—which, over the years, has included such titles as Jim Valentino's *ShadowHawk* (a violent crime fighter cast in the mold of Batman, blended with elements of Marvel's Iron Man and the Punisher); Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon* (a green-skinned superheroic monster-turned-supercop, who was the subject of a USA animated series from 1994 to 1996); Dale Keown's *Pitt* (a sharp-clawed, superstrong hero, simultaneously evocative of Marvel's Hulk and Wolverine); Whilce Portacio's *Wetworks* superteam; J. Scott Campbell's *Danger Girl* (a squad of "grrl-power" superheroines); Sam Kieth's *The Maxx* (a member of a race of personal guardian angels/spirit guides, whose comic book birthed a short-lived MTV animated series in 1994); and Trina Robbins' and Anne Timmons' *Go Girl* (a 1960s retro-style superheroine with an upbeat feminist subtext)—falls under the general rubric of Image Central, which is home to all Image titles not owned or produced by a founding Image partner (though the above-mentioned Image Central work of Larsen, Portacio, and Valentino are notable exceptions to this rule). Still, the trademarks and copyrights connected to all of these titles are the property of their respective creators, rather than of Image Comics.

From the beginning, Image Comics stood at the eye of a maelstrom of controversy. Though enormously popular with fans, the company's initial offerings, as typified by titles such as *Spawn*, and action-team comics like Silvestri's *Cyberforce* (1992), Liefeld's *Brigade* (1993), and Lee's *Gen13* (1994), received mixed critical reaction. While unquestionably a commercial success, the company drew barbs from detractors who regarded its titles as little more than collections of pinup art, and charged that plot and characterization usually took a back seat to stylistic considerations—which chiefly involved lovingly rendered illustrations of idealized musclemen and improbably upholstered female superheroes (a visual style that dominated superheroes of the 1990s in much the same way that Jack Kirby's pioneering dash had done in the 1960s). During the mid-1990s, veteran Marvel and DC comics writer Peter David quipped that a rival publishing house called "Substance" should be launched, to emphasize story and characterization in the hopes of countering Image's primarily art-driven esthetic.

During the first half of the 1990s, Image blossomed into a surprisingly diverse publisher, branching out into the sophisticated, realistic superheroics of *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* (1995), and presenting *A Touch of Silver* (1997), Jim Valentino's poignant autobiographical miniseries about a young superhero fan growing up in a dysfunctional home during the Silver Age of comics (1956–1969). Image even provided a home for Matt Wagner's delightful Arthurian fantasy *Mage* (1997), which had debuted to resounding acclaim in 1984 at the now defunct independent publisher Comico. Many Image properties have also appeared in successful "crossover" ventures with other publishers; most prominent among these intercompany efforts are team-ups between Spawn and Batman (DC); ShadowHawk and Vampirella (Harris Comics); and Savage Dragon and Superman (DC), the Atomics (AAA Pop Comics), the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Archie Comics and Mirage Comics), and Hellboy (Dark Horse). Top Cow's *Witchblade* has also shared the four-color page with such Marvel heroes as the Silver Surfer and Wolverine, as well as with Shi (Crusade Comics).

The Image experiment was not a completely successful one, however. Because the company has always been a loose confederation of creator-owned artistic and business entities, relationships within the company were predictably more anarchic than within the more staid corporate confines of Marvel or DC. The difficulty of coordinating and maintaining monthly production and publishing schedules eventually led to creative differences, and to the separation of some of

Image's founders. Consequently, many of Image's editorially interconnected titles—in which characters owned by different Image creators appeared in one another's books in much the same way that the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, and the Hulk had begun sharing the "Marvel Universe" as their four-color commons in the early 1960s—had to be disengaged from one another. Characters abruptly vanished from sight as they left Image for other publishing entities.

To accomplish this complex disentanglement, Image published a miniseries titled *Shattered Image* (1996), a sort of reverse version of DC Comics' *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. While *Crisis* was intended to consolidate several distinct universes into a single coherent narrative strand, Image's goal was to spin many of its characters off to whatever separate destinations their respective owners intended for them. Rob Liefeld left Image in 1997, taking his properties—most notably Supreme (a time-displaced supersoldier, a sort of cross between Captain America and Superman, who was introduced in 1993 in a self-titled series and whose World War II-era exploits were recounted in 1994's *Supreme: Glory Days* miniseries) and Youngblood (an X-Men/Avengers-inspired superteam)—to form Awesome Entertainment. Jim Lee's WildStorm Productions, which put out such superhero action titles as *WildC.A.T.S* and *Stormwatch* under the Image aegis, left the company in 1998 (along with WildStorm's two sub-imprints, Homage Comics and America's Best Comics) to become part of DC Comics. After the dust settled, the "Image universe" was a more sparsely populated place than it had been previously, although the *Spawn* titles, *Savage Dragon*, and *Witchblade* continued to find a profitable home under the Image colophon.

Fortunately for Image, superhero comics tend to grow like kudzu vines, even during the comics industry's slow periods, such as the late 1990s. Today, Image Comics competes with Dark Horse and IDW Publishing for the position of the third largest comics publisher (after Marvel and DC). Image began to provide a wide audience for titles originally published elsewhere, such as the daily *Zorro* newspaper strips of writer Don McGregor and illustrators Tom Yeates and Tod Smith.

Though Image publishes comics in many story genres, superheroes remain the company's bread and butter, an emphasis reinforced by the 2003 advent of such titles as *Firebreather* (a young, hip superhero who is part human, part Godzilla-type monster), *Invincible* (the teenage son of Omni-Man, Earth's most powerful superhero, who must cope with his developing powers while living up to his father's daunting reputation), and *Wildguard* (about a group of wannabe heroes auditioning for a superteam whose composition was ultimately determined by an audience-driven vote, à la Fox TV's *American Idol*). As the new millennium unfolds, Image appears to have remained largely true to its stated mission, which is to nurture, develop, and find audiences for unique, well-crafted creator-owned properties. —*MAM*

The Incredibles

One of the greatest critical and commercial successes from Pixar Animation Studios, *The Incredibles* is a computer-animated motion picture about a family of superheroes. This contemporary classic premiered in 2004 and was distributed by Walt Disney Pictures (the Walt Disney Company bought Pixar in 2006). Although filled with comedy, *The Incredibles* also succeeds in working as a suspenseful and serious superhero adventure saga.

The Incredibles was directed and written by Brad Bird. A protégé of Milt Kahl, one of Walt Disney's leading animators known as his "Nine Old Men," Bird became a director and executive consultant on *The Simpsons* in its first eight years. Bird directed Warner Bros.' 1999 animated film *The Iron Giant*, which makes references to both Superman and Will Eisner's *The Spirit*.

The Incredibles' title characters include Bob Parr, alias Mr. Incredible (voiced by Craig T. Nelson), who is superhumanly strong; his feisty wife, Helen, alias Elastigirl (played by Holly Hunter), who can stretch any part of her body; their initially shy teenage daughter, Violet (voiced by author Sarah Vowell), who can turn invisible and generate protective force fields; and her rambunc-

(L to R) Dash, Violet, Mr. Incredible, and Elastigirl from the CGI-animated film *The Incredibles.* (Disney/Pixar / The Kobal Collection).

tious younger brother, Dash (voiced by Spencer Fox), who can move at superspeed. Bob and Helen also have a new infant son, Jack-Jack, who proves to have superpowers of his own.

Other major characters include the supervillain Syndrome (voiced by Jason Lee), who as a boy tried to become Mr. Incredible's sidekick and as an adult tries to destroy all superheroes out of frustrated envy. His sultry assistant is Mirage (voiced by Elizabeth Pena). Bob Parr's best friend is the African American superhero Frozone (portrayed by Samuel L. Jackson), who has freezing powers. Brad Bird himself voices Edna Mode, the eccentric woman who designs The Incredibles' costumes. (Bird has stated that he intended Edna to be a combination of fashion aficionado and gadget builder along the lines of James Bond's Q; others have noted similarities to famed costume designer Edith Head.)

The film opens by showing how, soon after Mr. Incredible married Elastigirl, the federal government forced them and all other superheroes into retirement due to an onslaught of lawsuits. Years later Bob and Helen live in a suburb as the parents of three children, though Bob is frustrated at having to work at a dull desk job—a metaphor for a conformist society in which no one is allowed to use his talents to stand out from others. Bob secretly goes to work as Mr. Incredible for Mirage, only to captured by her employer Syndrome, who has been killing off the retired superheroes. Violet and Dash are stowaways when Helen goes to find Bob. The family go into action together as superheroes to combat Syndrome's minions and then to stop his gigantic Omnidroid robot from destroying a major city.

Though distinct in its approach, The Incredibles bear similarities to Marvel's own superhero family, the Fantastic Four. Violet has the same powers as Susan Richards, the Invisible Woman. Bob has superstrength like the Thing, and his alias "Mr. Incredible" resembles Reed Richards' name "Mr. Fantastic." Elastigirl has the same power as Mr. Fantastic, and the same superhero name (minus the hyphen) as Rita Farr of DC Comics' *Doom Patrol.* Perhaps partly in response, Rita recently changed her alias to "Elasti-Woman." Dash's name and superpower seem to be homages to DC's super-speedster, the Flash. The similarities are appropriate because *The Incredibles* echoes the superhero genre of comics' Silver Age, while nodding to other examples of 1960s pop culture; for example, Michael Giacchino's score evokes the music of Sean Connery's James Bond films of the era.

The Incredibles won the 2004 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature and BOOM! Studios published the comics miniseries *The Incredibles: Family Matters*, written by Mark Waid and drawn by Marcio Takara, in 2009, followed that same year by an ongoing monthly *The Incredibles* comics series. The marketplace also saw a flood of Incredibles tie-in merchandise, including costumes, toys, and movie collectibles. —*PS & GM*

The Inferior Five

For much of the company's existence, DC Comics had been the comic industry's most conservative publisher, somewhat staid and reserved, but the rise of Marvel Comics and the success of the 1960s camp *Batman* television show changed all that. One of DC's responses to a growing superhero market that could stand a bit of comedy was to introduce the Inferior Five. It was one of the first self-referential strips, taking swipes at the whole superhero genre and its conventions, and—most satisfyingly—actually managing to be funny.

The team was introduced in the pages of *Showcase* #62 (1966) by longtime fan/writer/editor E. Nelson Bridwell and artist Joe Orlando, and soon graduated to its own title. The story begins with the aging (and less-than-athletic) members of the Freedom Brigade being summoned by the Megalopolis police force to defend the city from the menace of a mad scientist. Quickly realizing that their crime-fighting days are well behind them, the Patriot, Lady Liberty, and their fellow Freedom Brigade members decide to send their children instead. Sadly, the younger generation lack their parents' awesome crime-fighting skills, but nevertheless decide to band together as the aptly named Inferior Five.

The team's leader was young cartoonist Myron Victor who, as the comic declared, "used to be a ninety-seven-pound weakling before losing weight." With no powers whatsoever, Victor dressed himself in a jester's costume, to illustrate the futility of his crime-fighting career, and went by the unheroic name of Merryman. Rotund Herman Cramer was the Blimp ("He flies like a bird with the speed of a snail"), who sadly did not inherit the incredible running prowess of his father, Captain Swift. The politically incorrect Dumb Bunny ("stronger than an ox … and almost as intelligent!") was beautiful but vacant model Athena Tremor, who wore a bunny-girl costume, complete with fluffy tail and ears. The team's strongman was beatnik beach-bum Leander Brent ("more powerful than a locomotive, but always getting derailed"), whose accident-prone bumbling earned him the name Awkwardman. Rounding out the group was the White Feather ("the only bird who's chicken!"), also known as glamour photographer William King, whose archery skills were somewhat undermined by his abject cowardice. The group communicated using telephones known as the Lukewarm Line, and rode about the city in their jalopy, the Inferi-Car.

Bridwell had a real talent for humor, which meant that the comic emphasized laughs over thrills. Indeed, with villains like Dr. Gruesome, the Sparrow, and the Masked Swastika (an armor-clad Napoleon Bonaparte look-alike), the title was always lighthearted. Another unusual aspect of the comic was its wholesale lampooning of Marvel's all-conquering heroes, who involuntarily guest-starred in many strips, frequently as rather pathetic villains. The Hulk became the Man Mountain, the Sub-Mariner was Prince Nabob the Submoron, and the Fantastic Four were the Kookie Quartet, while Spider-Man, Thor, the X-Men, and Iron Man were also affectionately parodied. Marvel replied with its own spoof comic, *Not Brand Echh,* but in that book by-and-large concentrated on satirizing its own characters (presumably being reluctant to give publicity to its rivals).

Perhaps the strip's most ambitious moment was in issue #6, in a bizarre story titled "How to Make a Bomb," which featured the Five taking a tour of DC's offices, and starred pretty much the company's full editorial team. Among other incidents, artists Carmine Infantino and Mike Sekowsky were shown having a fight, and DC owner Irwin Donenfeld was depicted as a lollipop-sucking child! Sadly, the comic got lost in the camp craze and, after ten issues of its own title, it was canceled, leaving in its wake a small, but enthusiastic, cult following.

After a long absence from print, Dumb Bunny turned up in the 1991 *Angel and the Ape* miniseries. But it was in the twenty-first century that the Inferior Five's time finally came once more. Merryman made a surprise appearance in Grant Morrison's *Final Crisis: Superman Beyond* (October 2008–March 2009), which, in a touch of meta-fiction, revealed him to be the "King of Limbo" for long missing superheroes. Dumb Bunny returned in *Ambush Bug: Year None* #3 (November 2008). Then writer J. Michael Straczynski brought back the entire Inferior Five in the comic *The Brave and the Bold* #35 (August 2010), in which Dumb Bunny revealed that she was not as dumb as she has pretended to be all these years. *—DAR & PS*

The Inhumans

Like so many Marvel Comics characters, the Inhumans were a creation of writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby, first appearing in a late 1965 issue of *The Fantastic Four* (#45). In fact, one of the Inhumans—Medusa—had been featured in the comic several months earlier as one of a motley group of villains called the Frightful Four, though her criminal career was short-lived. The Inhumans themselves were a carnival-show collection of strange-looking people unlike any other superteam. Their origin was revealed in several later issues of *Thor,* which described how, centuries ago, a force from the all-conquering Kree Empire had visited Earth and genetically engineered a hybrid human/alien race. Over the years, these had evolved and mutated, far from the gaze of humankind, before they came out of hiding in the 1960s.

The Inhumans were probably several thousand in number and lived in isolation in the ultramodern city of Attilan, hidden deep in the Himalayas (or Andes or Alps, depending on how good the writer's memory was!). The small group that ventured into the outside world were, in fact, the Royal Family, a powerful and fancifully garbed collection of uniquely mutated individuals. Their leader and king was Black Bolt, who could control molecular motion (whatever that meant) and whose voice could destroy everything in earshot with the merest whisper. Needless to say, he did not speak very often and conveyed his wishes through future wife, Medusa, who could control her incredibly long, animated, red hair. Other members of the group were the grotesque Gorgon, who could cause earthquakes with a stamp of his cloven hoof; diminutive martial-arts expert Karnak; scale-covered amphibian Triton; and the winsome young Crystal, who could control the elements.

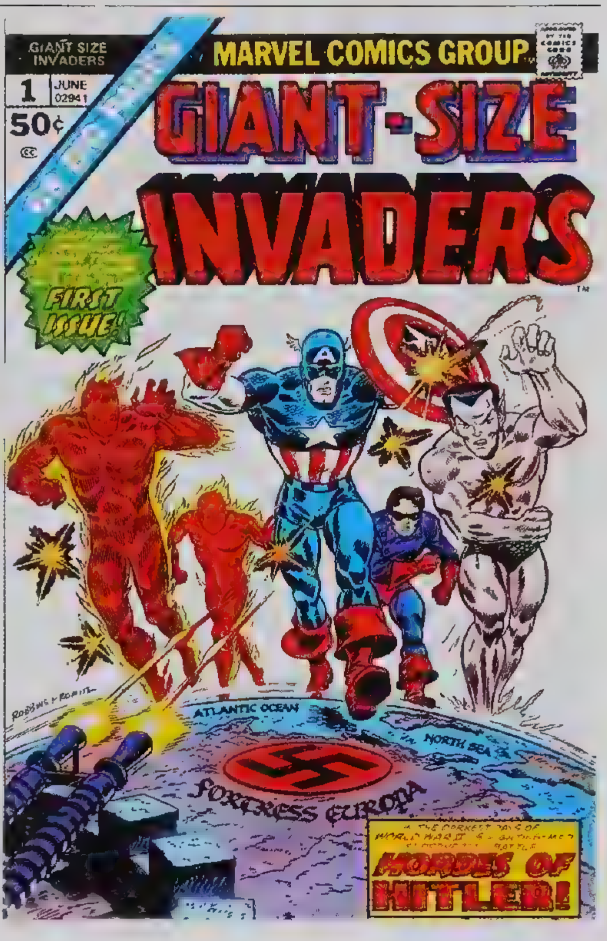
Crystal soon fell for the fresh-faced charms of the Human Torch, and when the Invisible Girl went on a seemingly interminable maternity leave, Crystal took her place in the Fantastic Four (FF). Crystal could whiz back and forth between the two groups with the help of her colossal, teleporting pet bulldog Lockjaw. In time, after the Invisible Girl left again (not for another baby but a marital separation), Crystal ran off with the Avenger Quicksilver, and Medusa briefly became an FF member in what was clearly a sort of job-share scheme for superheroes. The Inhumans, as a whole, regularly guest-starred in *Fantastic Four* and other comics (notably *The Hulk*) and in 1970 finally got their own feature in *Amazing Adventures*—though it only lasted ten issues. In the mid-1970s, they were given their own comic, but that survived for only twelve issues. Both attempts were well crafted, with an interesting mixture of radical Black Power politics (in *Amazing Adventures*), alien intrigue (in the 1975 *Inhumans* comic), and entertaining villains such as the Mandarin and Blastaar, yet neither venture proved popular enough to continue.

Perhaps the problems with the Inhumans were their outlandish appearance and somewhat detached personalities, or it might have been that they were mostly fighting a single enemy: Black Bolt's evil-genius brother, Maximus (in full, Maximus the Mad—which rather gave the game away). Maximus seemed to dedicate himself to overthrowing Black Bolt and the ruling Inhumans, who were endlessly taken in by him: "Oh no, he has betrayed us again!" However, following a lengthy fallow period, the Inhumans enjoyed something of a revival in the 1990s, with several specials and graphic novels, along with a self-titled series under the Marvel Knights imprint in 1999.

This series saw the group under siege from humankind, while the following year's miniseries featured the return of the Kree. The story culminated with the massed Inhumans deciding to stay in Attilan, now in the "blue area" of the moon, and banish the Royal Family to Earth. But the Royal Family returned to Attilan relatively quickly.

The Inhumans discovered that the alien shapeshifting Skrulls had taken Black Bolt prisoner and substituted a Skrull impostor in his place. In *Secret Invasion: War of Kings* (2009), the Inhumans turn Attilan into a massive starship, travel into outer space, and destroy Skrull warships. They then invade Hala, capital of the Kree empire, where the Royal Family confronts the Kree's ruler, Ronan the Accuser. Then in the miniseries *War of Kings* (2009), the Inhumans unite with the Kree empire, a bargain sealed by the marriage of Crystal and Ronan. Then, another interstellar empire, the Shi'ar, led by Vulcan, attacks. Black Bolt and Vulcan seemingly perish in an explosion that cripples the Shi'ar spacefleet, ending the war. But it is unlikely that Black Bolt is truly dead, and he will surely return. *—DAR & PS*

The Invaders



Giant-Size Invaders #1 © 1975 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Frank Robbins and John Romita.)

Considering how all-pervasive superhero teams have become since the 1960s, it is surprising that there were so few around in the 1940s. DC Comics had the Justice Society of America and the Seven Soldiers of Victory, and Fawcett had the Marvel Family, but Marvel Comics itself managed to produce precisely two stories of its sole adult team, the All-Winners Squad (though, of course, their kid gangs, such as the Young Allies and the Tough Kid Squad, thrived). The All-Winners Squad appeared in *All-Winners Comics* #19 and #21, in late 1946. The comic consisted of Marvel's "big three" heroes, the Sub-Mariner, the Human Torch, and Captain America; the latter two's sidekicks Toro and Bucky; and two lesser-known heroes, the Whizzer and Miss America. Years later, longtime fan and writer, Roy Thomas, remembered how effective the combination of the big three had been and used them again, in a time-travel issue of *The Avengers* (#71, 1969), pitting the 1940s and 1960s heroes against each other.

In 1975, looking around for a new project, Thomas decided to revive the concept of the All-Winners Squad (minus the Whizzer and Miss America) and to create new, untold tales of the heroes in their World War II prime. Thomas used the team, now christened the Invaders (which he reasoned sounded less embarrassing than "All-Winners Squad") to fill in gaps or correct lapses in old continuity, reintroduce forgotten heroes of the Golden Age (1938–1954), and create his own wartime characters. The result was one of the most action-packed, hero-packed, and fun-packed comics of the 1970s.

For art, Thomas turned to industry veteran Frank Robbins, who had been drawing the Johnny Hazard newspaper strip for decades and could provide just the right mixture of authentic period detail and slam-bang action. The team's first adventure appeared in *Giant Sized Invaders* #1 but, soon after, the decision to reduce its page count to that of a regular comic meant that its second issue was just plain *Invaders* #1—back then not many comics could boast of having two #1 issues! The team's origin was quite simple: All five members meet by coincidence, hot on the trail of the Nazis' answer to Captain America, Master Man (the first of many wonderfully kitsch villains), and are persuaded to stay together as a team by none other than Winston Churchill.

Over the course of forty-one issues, one annual, and several crossovers and guest appearances, the Invaders traveled the world, from the home front to a blitzed London to Egypt, Berlin, and even the Warsaw ghetto. Among the outlandish villains they trounced were Brain Drain, U-Man, Baron Blood (an aristocratic vampire), Blue Bullet (a man wearing a giant bullet costume), Warrior Woman, Frankenstein and—of course—Adolf Hitler. The first new heroes to appear, the Liberty Legion, were in fact a round-up of some of Marvel's many short-lived (not to say forgettable) wartime zeroes: the Red Raven, the Thin Man, Jack Frost, the Patriot, and Blue Diamond. These were joined by those leftover All-Winners, Miss America and the Whizzer. The Legion was actually introduced in 1976 in *Marvel Premiere* #29, and then crossed over to the *Invaders,* before guest-starring with the Thing for a couple of *Marvel-Two-in-One* yarns. Plans for their own comic went as far as drawing up a first issue, but that was abandoned; though much later the Whizzer and Miss America were promoted to full-time Invaders, thus reuniting the original All-Winners Squad.

Other Thomas creations included Lord Farnsworth, a.k.a. Union Jack (a British hero of World War I), his daughter Jacqueline (who gained superspeed to become the Spitfire), and her brother Brian, who was first the Destroyer—another Golden Age Marvel hero—before taking over the Union Jack costume from his now aged father. Toward the end of the comic's first run, Thomas created a new, racially mixed kid group called the Kid Commandos, composed of Bucky, Toro, the Human Top, and Golden Girl. This particular Golden Girl was no relation to Captain America's erstwhile companion; she was, rather, comics' first Japanese American heroine. Indeed, this team's creation grew out of one of the war's most controversial episodes: the internment of America's Asian community.

Frank Robbins left the *Invaders* at the point of creation of the Kid Commandos, in issue #28, which was a blow from which the title never recovered; it was canceled with issue #41 in late 1979. Thomas returned for one last hurrah with a 1993 *Invaders* miniseries, which added the Thin Man to the team and re-introduced two of the company's longer-lasting Golden Age superheroes: the Angel and the Blazing Skull.

The series *The New Invaders* (2004–2005) showcased a team that included both contemporary heroes, such as U. S. Agent and the present day Union Jack, and Timely heroes including the Blazing Skull, the original Human Torch, and the Thin Man. Another Golden Age hero, the Fin (created by Bill Everett), was a guest star.

Marvel and Dynamite Entertainment jointly produced the year-long *Avengers/Invaders* series (2008–2009), a time travel story co-plotted by Jim Krueger and Alex Ross. The Marvel miniseries *Invaders Now* (2010) reunited Steve Rogers (the original Captain America), Bucky Barnes (then acting as Captain America), the original Human Torch, Toro, the Sub-Mariner, the original Vision (Aarkus), and Spitfire on a mission in the present day.

Another recent comics series, *The Twelve* (2008), written by J. Michael Straczynski, brings back twelve more Golden Age Timely heroes into the present day: the Blue Blade, the Golden Age version of the Black Widow, Captain Wonder, Dynamic Man, the robot Electro, the Fiery Mask (created by Joe Simon), the Laughing Mask, Master Mind Excello, Mister E, the Phantom Reporter, Rockman, and the Witness, who was one of the earliest co-creations by Stan Lee. *—DAR & PS*

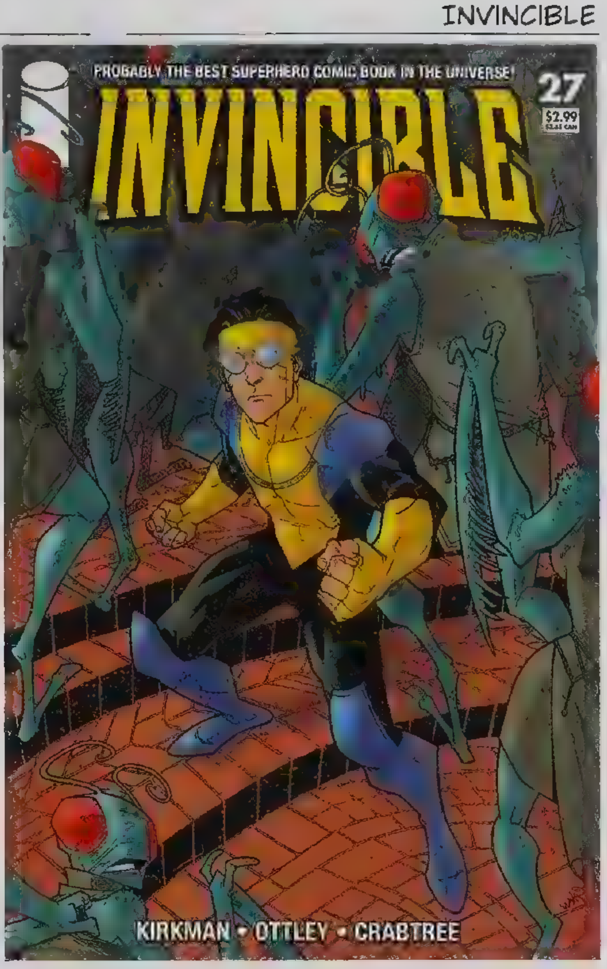
Invincible

Teenage superhero Mark Grayson is the title character of the *Invincible* comic book series that was co-created by writer Robert Kirkman and is published by Image Comics. Kirkman, a prolific comics writer, is now perhaps best known as co-creator of the comics series about zombies, *The Walking Dead* (2003), which has been adapted into a successful television series on the AMC cable network. Invincible made his first appearance in another Image comic written by Kirkman, *Tech Jacket* #1 (November 2002). The *Invincible* comic book debuted in 2003, and was co-created by artist Cory Walker, who was succeeded by artist Ryan Davies in issue #8.

Mark Grayson is the son of author Nolan Grayson and his wife Deborah. Nolan was really an alien from the Vitrumite race, who had become the superhero Omni-Man on Earth. When Mark was seven, Nolan revealed all this to him, claiming that the Vitrumites were a peaceful race. Eventually the superpowers that Mark inherited from his father emerged, including superstrength, superspeed, high resistance to injury, and the ability to fly. Mark became the Invincible, a costumed superhero, sometimes acting as his father's sidekick.

But Omni-Man was actually a sleeper agent for the Vitrumite Empire, which intended to conquer Earth. Omni-Man finally began preparing the way for the Vitrumite invasion by murdering the members of Earth's superhero team, the Guardians of the Globe. Discovering his father's true mission, Invincible waged a tremendous battle against Omni-Man that devastated a city. Omni-Man nearly killed Invincible, but, unwilling to kill his son, instead fled from Earth. Invincible thereafter joins a new Guardians of the Globe and continues his superhero career.

Kirkman co-created many other superheroes in the *Invincible* series. The original Guardians of the Globe parallel many members of the Justice League. Aquarus, a fishlike humanoid who was king of undersea Atlantis, possessed superstrength and could breathe in or out of water. The original Darkwing was a crime fighter based in Midnight City who costumed himself like a bird of prey. He lacked superpowers but instead relied on his skills as a detective, peak physical condition, and specialized weaponry. The Green Ghost swallowed an amulet that enabled him to fly and turn intangible. Martian Man was from Mars, and had shapeshifting powers, the ability to fly, and superstrength. The Red Rush was a Russian who could move at superspeed. The superstrong War Woman was a warrior princess from the mysterious "Other Realms." These characters evoke Aquaman, Batman, Green Lantern, Martian Manhunter, the Flash, and Wonder Woman, respectively. Omni-Man killed all the original Guardians except for the superstrong Black Samson, and the Immortal, whose regenerative powers enabled him to survive even after Omni-Man temporarily decapitated him. The Immortal does not age, is virtually unkillable, and has lived for millennia; he adopted America as his home, and even served as President under the guise of Abraham Lincoln!


PROBABLY THE BEST SUPERHERO COMIC BOOK IN THE UNIVERSE!
INVINCIBLE
27
$2.99
KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE

Invincible #27 © 2005 Robert Kirkman and Cory Walker. Published by Image Comics. (Cover art by Ryan Ottley and Bill Crabtree.)

Black Samson and the Immortal both joined the second Guardians of the Globe. Among this second team's other members are Bulletproof, who is nearly invulnerable to injury; Dupli-Kate, who can create duplicates of herself; Monster

Girl, who can transform into a superstrong monster; Rex Splode, who could cause inorganic materials to explode; a Martian shapeshifter called Shapesmith; and Shrinking Ray, who could shrink himself in size (and who was apparently killed). Another Guardians member, Robot, originally seemed to be a sentient robot. In fact, he was a deformed human genius named Rudy Conners, who operated a robot body by remote control. Conners has since transferred his mind into a cloned human body, which has an implanted device that enables him to control one or more robot bodies mentally. Dupli-Kate, Rex Splode, and Robot previously belonged to the Teen Team group. The Guardians recruited many new members from around the world in the 2010 miniseries *Guarding the Globe*.

A video adaptation of *Invincible*, with highly limited animation based on the original comics artwork, was released in 2008 and has been telecast on the cable television network MTV2 and sold via iTunes. —*PS*

Iron Fist

On the prowl for new pop-culture fads to seize upon, Marvel Comics began exploiting kung fu films in the early 1970s, beginning with their hero Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu (*Special Marvel Edition* #15, 1973). The early success of Shang-Chi—a fairly straight adaptation of the martial arts film hero, mixed with elements of Sax Rohmer's pulp stories of the 1910s and 1920s—convinced Marvel to try integrating such characters into the ranks of its costumed superheroes. Iron Fist (Daniel Rand), the creation of writer Roy Thomas and artist Gil Kane, represented the first such attempt (*Marvel Premiere* #15, 1974).

Wealthy businessman Wendell Rand, an exile from the interdimensionally hidden Tibetan city of K'un-L'un, dies at the hands of his business partner Harold Meachum, while seeking the city of his birth. Rand's wife Heather and their nine-year-old son Daniel end up stranded in the Himalayas; only the boy succeeds in reaching K'un-L'un alive. Inside the mystical realm—which resembles a cross between the Shangri-La of Frank Capra's 1937 film *Lost Horizon* and the eponymous Scottish village of the 1947 Lerner and Loewe musical *Brigadoon*—young Danny is taken in by a martial artist named Lei Kung the Thunderer, who recognizes him as part of the royal line and spends a decade training him in all aspects of the martial arts, both physical and philosophical. At the age of 19, Rand undergoes his coming-of-age ritual by slaying Shou-Lao the Undying, a powerful dragon. The combat leaves Rand with a stylized black dragon tattoo emblazoned across his chest and the Power of the Iron Fist—the ability to focus the power of his spirit (his "chi") into his hand, making it as strong as iron, all but impervious to harm, and capable of delivering devastating blows that crackle with mystic energies. Like the martial arts themselves, Rand's new power has more than one aspect, giving Rand the ability to heal as well as to destroy. His only vulnerability: When Rand uses his Iron Fist, his energy is depleted, and he becomes exhausted for hours afterward.

Intent on avenging his parents' deaths by killing Meachum, Rand leaves K'un-L'un for the United States. But when he confronts the man whom he had hated for the past decade, Rand discovers that vengeance holds no solace and decides instead to settle for taking over his late father's position controlling the Rand-Meachum Corporation—only to witness Meachum's murder at the hands of ninja assassins. The authorities blame Rand for the murder, and it takes several months for him to clear his name, with some help from female adventurer (and future long-term ally) Misty Knight (*Marvel Premiere* #21, 1975).

Iron Fist's "audition" in *Marvel Premiere* (a testing ground for new Marvel heroes, not unlike DC's *Showcase* title of the 1950s and 1960s) proved successful, despite frequent changes of creative personnel throughout 1974 and 1975, and landed the character in a self titled series (*Iron Fist* vol. 1, 1975), written by Chris Claremont and penciled by John Byrne. This creative team, though destined for fame in the early 1980s on *X-Men*, couldn't keep the series running past its fifteenth issue (1977), by which time the sun had set on the kung fu movie fad. But Claremont and

Byrne continued presiding over Iron Fist's brief stint on Marvel's guest-star circuit (*Marvel Team-Up* #63, 1977; *Power Man* #48, 1977), as well as the first several issues of his lengthy tenure as half of *Power Man and Iron Fist* (formerly titled *Power Man*), which began in issue #49 (1978). After Claremont and Byrne left to concentrate on *X-Men,* a raft of creative talent rotated in to replace them, including such writers as Ed Hannigan, Mary Jo Duffy, Bob Layton, Steven Grant, Mike W. Barr, Dennis O'Neil, Kurt Busiek, Archie Goodwin, Alan Rowlands, Jim Owsley, and Tony Isabella, and such pencilers as Mike Zeck, Sal Buscema, Lee Elias, Trevor Von Eedon, Marie Severin, Kerry Gammill, Greg LaRocque, Frank Miller, Denys Cowan, Keith Pollard, Ernie Chan, Geoff Isherwood, Richard Howell, Steve Geiger, and Mark Bright.

Working together, Iron Fist and Power Man (Luke Cage) establish a business venture called Heroes for Hire, Inc., and their disparate temperaments—Rand's reserved wisdom and Cage's mercurial anger—prove to complement each other well (combined in a single title, these heroes ended up lasting far longer than either of them had done on their own). Of the innovation that the Power Man/Iron Fist character dynamic represented when it first appeared in the 1970s, latter-day Iron Fist writer Jay Faerber said, "Well for one thing, I think it was refreshing to see a white guy paired with a black guy. And they were equals. Luke wasn't Danny's sidekick or his driver. Luke's stories took center stage just as often as Danny's did, and that give and take was like a breath of fresh air, even if I was too young to recognize that appeal when I was originally reading the book." Despite their contrasts, some of which were occasionally played for laughs, one commonality that united both heroes was their keen sense of conscience, which led to a tendency to place the hero ethic above profits; they frequently worked for free, despite being in high demand as detectives and bodyguards.

One of Iron Fist's most significant travails occurred during the last few issues of the series; after Danny Rand's inadvertent destruction of his beloved K'un-L'un unhinges him, he turns evil (symbolized by the transformation of his usually green-and-yellow costume into a red-and-yellow one, a development that echoed the 1980 Claremont/Byrne *X-Men* "Dark Phoenix"). All efforts to purge Rand of this evil streak end up failing. In the final issue of the series in 1986 (*Power Man and Iron Fist* #125), Iron Fist apparently dies at the hands of a character named Captain Hero (not to be confused with Jughead's superheroic alter ego at Archie Comics), and Power Man is framed for Rand's murder. "[Iron] Fist's death was supposed to be shocking and senseless," writer Owsley said in a 1999 interview. "It wasn't bad writing. The fact that thirteen years after the fact people are still annoyed about it speaks to the quality of the work, the impact of which has apparently not diminished over time."

But thanks to John Byrne's exercises in retroactive continuity (known in the comic book trade as a "retcon"), the dead Iron Fist later turns out to have been a mere doppelgänger, with the real Rand imprisoned back in K'un-L'un (and still struggling to control an evil side of his character). Rand's martial arts instructor Lei Kung joins forces with Prince Namor the Sub-Mariner and the Daughters of the Dragon (Heroes for Hire veterans Misty Knight and Colleen Wing) to free Rand and return him to New York City (*Namor, the Sub-Mariner* #23 and #28, 1992). Iron Fist subsequently starred in a self-titled (and critically panned) two-issue miniseries in 1996 (written by James Felder and drawn by Robert Brown), before returning to a greatly expanded Heroes for Hire, Inc., which includes not only Power Man and Iron Fist, but also the Hulk, Hercules (his immortality now a thing of the past), Ant Man (Scott Lang), the Black Knight (Dane Whitman), and the martial artist known as the White Tiger (*Heroes for Hire* #1–#19, 1997–1999, written by Roger Stern and John Ostrander, with pencils by Paschalis Ferry, Scott Kolins, Martin Egeland, and Mary Mitchell).

Iron Fist surfaced again in another three-issue miniseries during this period (*Iron Fist* vol. 3, 1998), with stories by Dan Jurgens and art by Jackson Guice; Iron Fist assisted Quicksilver and the Inhumans in "The Siege of Wundagore," thanks to Ostrander and Ferry (*Heroes for Hire/Quicksilver Annual* 1998). At the turn of the millennium, Iron Fist crossed paths with the X-Men's Wolverine (*Iron Fist/Wolverine: The Return* of *K'un-L'un* #1–#4, 2000–2001, written by Jay Faerber and drawn by Jamal Igle). He was back again to wrestle with more personal demons and with the Black Panther in the latter's series (vol. 2 #38–#40, 2002), and regained an ongoing title of his own in 2004, in the first comics work by writer Jim Mullaney of the *Destroyer* paperback series.

Iron Fist starred in yet another new ongoing comics series, *The Immortal Iron Fist*, co-written by Ed Brubaker and Matt Fraction, with art by David Aja, starting in 2006. In recent years Iron Fist has served as a member of the New Avengers. He also has become the mentor of a young superhero, Victor Alvarez, the new Power Man. *—MAM & PS*

Iron Man

Ever since his creation in early 1963 (in *Tales of Suspense* #39), Iron Man has been one of Marvel Comics' heavy hitters, a consistent seller in his own title and a regular guest in other comics, including *The Avengers*. Iron Man's creation is officially credited to four people: writer/editor Stan Lee, who plotted the first story; his brother Larry Lieber, who scripted it; artist Don Heck, who drew it; and the great Jack Kirby, who designed Iron Man's original armored battlesuit.

In his alter ego of Anthony (Tony) Stark, wealthy playboy inventor, owner of Stark International, and (let's not beat about the bush here) an international arms manufacturer, he was an unlikely figure for young readers to identify with. (Lee partly based Stark on the wealthy inventor and business mogul Howard Hughes in his younger days.) In Marvel's early days, much was made of the company's creation of "heroes with problems," and Stark's was potentially fatal: While demonstrating some new weapons in the jungles of Vietnam, he is injured by a bomb and captured by a Viet Cong warlord. With his life ebbing away, Stark is forced to work for his captors, creating new weapons, but unknown to them he secretly builds himself a high-tech suit of armor that will both keep him alive and make him a walking arsenal.

Once in the gray, clanking suit, Stark defeats the warlord and returns to the United States to assume the role of a superhero, but his tragedy is that he can never remove the chest plate that keeps him alive. (Indeed, Stark admits, "The name of Iron Man makes strong men tremble! But, what good does it do me?? I can never relax … never be without my chest plate—never lead a normal life!") To compound his dilemma, the armor needs constant recharging and has the unfortunate tendency to run out of power at the most inconvenient moments, usually in the middle of a pitched battle. With many of his stories taking place in the vast Stark International complex, readers were soon introduced to Iron Man's rather morose chauffeur, "Happy" Hogan, perky secretary "Pepper" Potts, and the inevitable love triangle. Hogan loved Potts but knew that he would never be good enough for her; Potts loved Stark but he was her boss; and Stark loved Potts but was held back by the prospect of his keeling over dead at any moment.

As very much the establishment superhero, it is perhaps no surprise that Iron Man was Marvel's premier red-baiting strip for its first decade, sometimes even showing Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev plotting against Stark. Almost all Iron Man's major villains were communists of some hue or nationality, including Titanium Man, an armor-wearing Soviet giant (later immortalized by singer Paul McCartney in a song on his *Venus and Mars* album). Notable exceptions were the Melter, the Black Knight (one of many Black Knights in comics), Count Nefaria, the Maggia (an all-purpose crime cartel), and his archenemy, the Mandarin. A sinister Chinese mastermind in the tradition of Sax Rohmer's Dr. Fu Manchu, the Mandarin rivals Stark in scientific genius and is out to conquer the entire planet.

By the late 1960s, Potts had given up pining for Stark and had married the nearest man—who just happened to be Hogan. So Stark embarked on a series of doomed, tragic romances. The first of these, Whitney Frost, turned out to be the mysteri-

Iron Man (2008) and *Iron Man 2* (2010) have both done well at the box office. (Marvel/Paramount / The Kobal Collection.)

ous leader of the Maggia, but then became Madame Masque after her face was scarred. Happy Hogan was periodically called in to help Iron Man and, inevitably, managed to turn himself into a bald giant called the Freak. There's no doubt about it: Knowing Tony Stark was dangerous business.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Iron Man was a mainstay of Marvel's output—appearing in all sorts of consumer merchandise, featured in the *Marvel Superheroes* television cartoon show from 1966 to 1968, and taking a bow as the hero in William Rotsler's novel *And Call My Killer ... Modok* (1979). The character was one of the charter members of the Avengers and has maintained a regular presence in that superhero group ever since. Stark's millions have come in handy, funding the plush Avengers' mansion, for instance; and his technical wizardry has enabled him to devise all manner of means for getting the team out of trouble. That same technical brilliance also created an ever-evolving suit of armor, and his hulking gray costume was soon transformed into a sleek, shining red-and-gold number, bristling with gadgets and ordnance. For his six-year run in *Tales to Astonish,* Iron Man was predominantly written by his co-creator, Stan Lee, and drawn by Don Heck or Gene Colan, and when he was given his own title, in 1968, George Tuska became his artist for most of the next one hundred issues. With that sort of creative stability, fans generally knew what to expect and, if truth be told, this most middle-aged of heroes was occasionally rather dull.

That all changed in the 1980s, when the young writing team of David Michelinie and Bob Layton, along with artist John Romita Jr., decided to shake up the comic. Under the new regime, things began to go very wrong for Iron Man, as Stark International was hit by industrial espionage. A despairing Stark took to the bottle and had to draft in one of his employees (and best friend), Jim Rhodes, as a stand-in Iron Man. Were the fans ready for an alcoholic superhero? They certainly were, and for the first time in its existence, the feature actually started winning awards. However, once the creative team left for other projects, the awards dried up and the comic entered a period of almost constant change.

Rhodes regularly took over the Iron Man mantle (in response to Stark falling off the wagon) and eventually struck out on his own as War Machine, a sort of ethical world policeman, suited up in Iron Man armor. Stark's company collapsed, and he had to start again from scratch. He was paralyzed by an assassin's bullet (but recovered three issues later), got drunk again, died and came back to life, and got drunk once more. Throughout, readers noticed how *Iron Man* stories depicted the contrast between Stark's vulnerability in his civilian identity and his invincibility as a super heroic modern knight in shining armor. One well-received interlude in Stark's troubled times was a storyline called "Armor Wars," which revealed that various Marvel villains had been ripping off Stark's technology for years for their own weapons.

In the 1990s, Marvel decided to put Stark out of his misery and killed him off (*Iron Man* #325, 1996). However, one issue later a teenage Stark was plucked from an alternate dimension and began where the original left off (although without the alcohol). As part of its short-lived "Heroes Reborn" reboot, Marvel launched a new *Iron Man* series, Vol. 2 (1996–1997), set in a pocket universe, featuring an adult Tony Stark. This Iron Man returned to the mainstream Marvel universe and starred in another new *Iron Man* series, Vol. 3, beginning in 1998 and initially written by Kurt Busiek, who established that this was the original Tony Stark (with the memories of all previous versions). Author Warren Ellis and artist Adi Granov were the original creative team on Vol. 4, which began in 2005, and writer Matt Fraction and artist Salvador Larroca launched Vol. 5 in 2008.

In early twenty-first century comics, Tony Stark has publicly revealed his identity as Iron Man, and acted as U. S. Secretary of Defense. Stark played a major role in Marvel's *Civil War* (2006–2007) as the leader of the superheroes who supported the U. S. government's Superhuman Registration Act (which has since been repealed), and briefly served as the director of the law enforcement agency S.H.I.E.L.D. Since then Stark has pledged to stop manufacturing armaments and founded a new company, Stark Resilient. The latest version of Iron Man's armor is housed within the hollow parts of Stark's skeleton, when not in use, and is controlled directly through his central nervous system. Hence he has become a cyborg, a man with computerized machine parts.

An alternate version of Iron Man is also one of the original members of the title team in Marvel's *The Ultimates,* about the Avengers' counterparts in an parallel universe, and stars in two *Ultimate Iron Man* comics miniseries (2005–2006 and 2007–2008), written by acclaimed science fiction author Orson Scott Card.

Iron Man first appeared in animation in 1966 in *The Marvel Super Heroes* television series, in which he was voiced by actor John Vernon. He received his own *Iron Man* animated series in 1994, with Robert Hays providing his voice. Iron Man appears in two animated series that debuted in 2009, *Iron Man: Armored Adventures* and *The Super Hero Squad Show,* and also in another, *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes,* which debuted in 2010. Iron Man likewise appears in the direct-to-video animated films *Ultimate Avengers* (2006) and *The Invincible Iron Man* (2007).

Marvel Studios and Paramount released the first live action *Iron Man* motion picture in 2008. An enormous commercial and critical success, the film was directed by Jon Favreau and starred Robert Downey, Jr., who proved to be superb at capturing Tony Stark's personality, brilliance, and charisma. Other cast members included Gwyneth Paltrow as Pepper Potts; Terrence Howard as James Rhodes; Jeff Bridges as Obadiah Stane, a villain co-created in the comics by writer Denny O'Neil; Favreau as Happy Hogan; and a cameo by Samuel L. Jackson as Nick Fury, director of S.H.I.E.L.D.. Favreau also directed the 2010 sequel, *Iron Man 2,* in which Downey, Paltrow, Favreau, and Jackson returned to their roles. Don Cheadle takes over the role of Rhodes, who becomes War Machine in this movie. The film also features Scarlett Johansson as the Black Widow. Mickey Rourke and Sam Rockwell play Whiplash and Justin Hammer, respectively, both classic villains from the *Iron Man* comics. Robert Downey, Jr. stars as Iron Man again in the 2012 movie *The Avengers*, and in *Iron Man 3,* to be released in 2013. —*DAR & PS*

Irredeemable

What would happen if a superhero with powers as great as Superman's turned criminally insane? That is the premise of *Irredeemable,* a comics series that was created by writer Mark Waid and artist Peter Krause for BOOM! Studios, a new comics company based in Los Angeles, that was founded in 2005. Waid became the company's Chief Creative officer, and the first issue of *Irredeemable* was published in April 2009.

The series centers on Daniel Hartigan, alias the Plutonian, the greatest and most powerful superhero on Earth, whose powers include vast superstrength, invulnerability, and flight. He was the leader of the Paradigm, the superhero team that is this series' equivalent of the Justice League. But, according to Waid, the Plutonian lacked the "emotional capability" to wield such immense power responsibly. As a child, he was adopted by a series of foster parents, each of whom ultimately rejected him out of fear of his superpowers. As an adult superhero, the Plutonian repeatedly became aware of how people feared him, and was appalled to discover through his superhuman senses the depths of evil to which some human beings could sink. When his sidekick, Samsara, discovered that the Plutonian had made a lethal error, inadvertently releasing an alien virus that killed hundreds of innocent children, the Plutonian lost his sanity.

Overwhelmed by rage at humanity, the Plutonian turned into his world's most powerful and dangerous supervillain. He used his powers to lobotomize Samsara. He obliterated both Sky City, the city that was his home base, and the nation of Singapore, killing millions of people, thus becoming "irredeemable." The Plutonian also began stalking and killing the world's other superheroes, who had to find a way to stop him.

Among the members of the Paradigm was the Hornet, a non-superpowered crime fighter, who was the Plutonian's friend and partner; their relationship parallels the one between Superman and Batman. In the first issue, the Plutonian murders the Hornet and his family, but not before the

Hornet sets into motion a plan to bring about the Plutonian's defeat.

After the Plutonian goes rogue, Mr. Qubit becomes the Paradigm's unofficial leader. A genius, Qubit has the psionic power to mentally assemble machinery parts into any invention he can conceive. Other members of the Paradigm include Gilgamos, a winged superhero who loses his wings in the course of the saga; his wife Bette Noir, a costumed crime fighter who is a superb markswoman (although married to Gilgamos, she had an affair with the Plutonian before he turned villain); the twin brothers Scylla and Charybdis (the latter who is later known as Survivor), who both share the energy that gives them superstrength; Kaidan, a woman with the power to summon spirits from Japanese folklore, and who discovers that she can also raise the spirits of superheroes whom the Plutonian has murdered; and Volt, an African American hero who can discharge electrical bolts, and who is killed in the series.

Max Damage, a superstrong supervillain who was an adversary of the Plutonian, turns into a superhero, renaming himself Max Daring. He became the protagonist of a spinoff series, *Incorruptible,* also written by Waid, which BOOM! Studios began publishing in December 2009.

In 2010 BOOM! Studios also began publishing a line of new superhero comics in collaboration with Stan Lee and his company POW! (Purveyors of Wonder) Entertainment. Kronus, the hero of *Stan Lee's The Traveler,* written by Mark Waid and drawn by Chad Hardin, is a time traveler who can slow down and speed up the flow of time, and battles time-traveling assassins called the Split-Second Men. *Stan Lee's Starborn,* written by Chris Robertson and drawn by Khary Randolph, centers on Benjamin Warner, an aspiring science fiction writer who learns that he is the son of the former ruler of a galactic empire. Stewart Trautmann, the protagonist of *Stan Lee's Soldier Zero,* originally written by Paul Cornell and illustrated by Javier Pina, is an Afghanistan war veteran who is confined to a wheelchair, but bonds with a superstrong alien warrior to become the "shared being" Soldier Zero.

Another BOOM! superhero series is *Hero Squared,* created by writers J. M. DeMatteis and Keith Giffen and artist Joe Abraham, about Captain Valor, who travels from his alternate Earth to the "real world." The series debuted with a special from Atomeka Press in 2004; BOOM! began publishing *Hero Squared* in 2005. —*PS*

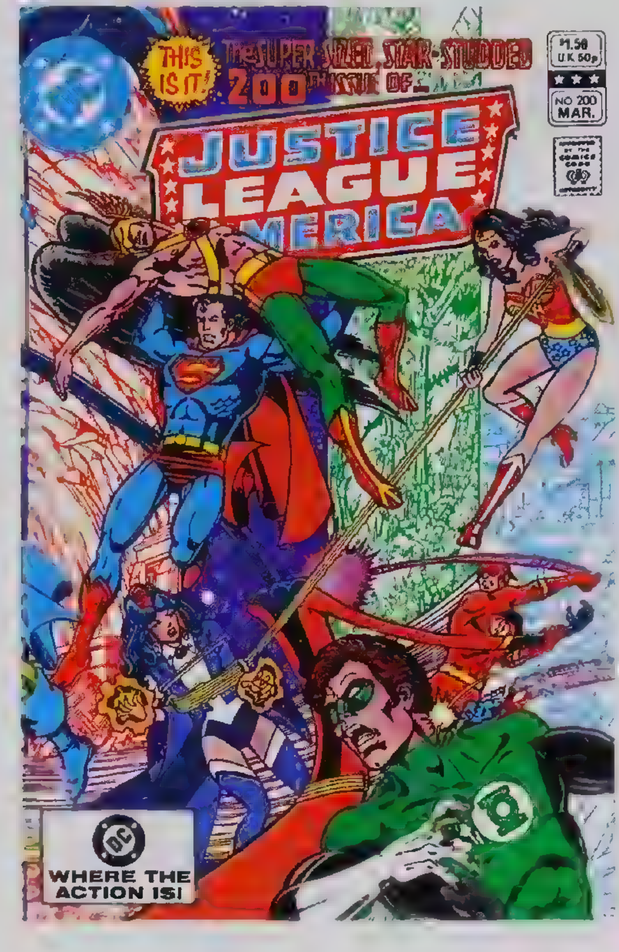
Justice League of America

Just imagine! The mightiest heroes of our time … have banded together as the Justice League of America to stamp out the forces of evil wherever and whenever they appear!" So screamed the text of a DC Comics house advertisement in 1960, promoting *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (March 1960). In that story, the first superhero team of the Silver Age (1956–1969) was established, and Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Flash, Green Lantern, Martian Manhunter, and even Superman and Batman came together as a group to fight crime. Their legacy would last well over forty years to the modern day. And the current Justice League of America, now known as JLA, still contains the same members, even if some faces behind the masks have changed.

The Justice League was the brainchild of DC editor Julius Schwartz, who saw the smash revivals of Flash and Green Lantern as a time to update and reintroduce one of DC's most venerable older superhero groups, the Justice Society of America. Schwartz wanted the new group to have a different name, as he related in *The Amazing World of DC Comics* #14 (1977) when he said, "To me, 'Society' meant something you found on Park Avenue. I felt that 'League' was a stronger word, one that the readers could identify with because of baseball leagues." Schwartz assigned famed Golden Age (1938–1954) sci-fi writer Gardner Fox to script the new series, and artists Mike Sekowsky and Bernard Sachs to illustrate the book. After two further issues of *The Brave and the Bold,* the JLA was awarded its own title with *Justice League of America* #1 (November 1960).

The early *Justice League of America* stories showcased the creative team's ability to introduce exciting new villains, such as Starro the starfish alien conqueror, power-stealing android Amazo, mesmerizing three-eyed alien Despero, tubby Professor Fortune, magician Felix Faust, Dr. Light, the Royal Flush Gang, Queen Bee, and many others. At the group's mountain hideaway "Secret Sanctuary"—outside Happy Harbor on the East Coast—hot DC stars were welcomed in as new members. Green Arrow joined in issue #4 (May 1961), while the Atom came along in #14 (September 1962). The team even had a hip speaking teen sidekick named Snapper Carr, who managed to help his super-buddies often.

The origin of the JLA wasn't revealed until issue #9 (February 1962), wherein the team members fought alien champions from the planet Appellax. But the most memorable stories from the Justice League's early days came with issues #21–#22 (August–September 1963), which saw the heroes reuniting with their forebears, the Justice Society of America. As had been seen in *The*


THIS IS IT!
The SUPER-SIZED, STAR-STUDDED 200TH ISSUE OF...
JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
$1.50 U.K. 60p
NO 200 MAR.
DC
WHERE THE ACTION IS!

Justice League of America #200 © 1982 DC Comics. (Cover art by George Pérez.)

Flash #123 (September 1961), the JSA lived on Earth-Two, while the JLA lived on Earth-One. Piercing the barrier between the Earths enabled the two teams to fight super-criminals together. The team-up proved so popular that the stories—most of which included the word "Crisis" in their titles—became a yearly event in *Justice League of America*.

Fox and Sekowsky left the series in 1968, and writer Denny O'Neil and artist Dick Dillin came aboard as replacements. Dillin penciled 120 consecutive *League* issues until his death in 1980, whereupon George Pérez and other artists took over. More heroes joined or were offered honorary memberships in the JLA, including Hawkman, Black Canary, Elongated Man, Red Tornado, Hawkgirl/Hawkwoman, Zatanna, Firestorm, the Phantom Stranger, Adam Strange, the Creeper, Metamorpho, Sargon the Sorceror, and others. Some resigned or took leaves of absence, including Green Arrow and Wonder Woman. The team moved their headquarters from the mountain to an orbiting satellite, constructed using Thanagarian technology (from Hawkman's homeworld) and requiring members to use transportation tubes to gain entrance.

In 1984, the *Justice League of America* series was radically revamped. The team disbanded after a Martian attack, and then reformed with Aquaman as the leader. Headquartered in a bunker in an abandoned Detroit factory—and later in the original mountain base—this Justice League was full of newcomers such as animalistic Vixen, second-generation strongman Steel, chameleon-like Gypsy, breakdancer Vibe, and a few old-timers. The team didn't click with readers for very long, and *Justice League of America* was canceled with issue #261 (April 1987).

During 1987's *Legends* miniseries, some of the "Detroit" Leaguers were killed, and a new JLA was formed. Members of the new *Justice League* series (debuting May 1987) included Batman, Martian Manhunter, Black Canary, Blue Beetle, Mr. Miracle, Green Lantern/Guy Gardner, Captain Marvel, and new heroine, Dr. Light. Joining shortly thereafter were Booster Gold, the Creeper, Captain Atom, Ice-Maiden/Ice, Green Flame/Fire, Big Barda, Dr. Fate, and Russian hero Rocket Red. A mysterious benefactor named Maxwell Lord helped run the team, getting them international diplomatic status.

The new series proved popular with the fans, largely because of the humorous ways its creators played with the heroes. J. M. DeMatteis and Keith Giffen never took the characters too seriously, and penciler Kevin Maguire proved adept at facial reactions that conveyed more than dialogue ever could. The popular series was renamed *Justice League International* with issue #7 (November 1987), and then *Justice League America* with #26 (May 1989). Multiple spin-offs were soon published: *Justice League Europe* (1989–1993), which became *Justice League International* (1993–1994); *Justice League Quarterly* (1990–1994); *Justice League Task Force* (1993–1994); and *Extreme Justice* (1995–1996). These comics filled the stands, with each book spotlighting a different crew of superheroes operating from Justice League embassies throughout the world. Eventually though, the various series' popularity tapered off, and with *Justice League America* #113 (August 1996), all the Leaguers were out of work.

A few appearances passed by, and another series was launched with a shorter-titled *JLA* issue #1 (January 1997), written by one of comics' leading names, Grant Morrison, with art by Howard Porter (though the characters in the book still referred to their group by its full title most of the time). This time the big guns were brought back to confront earth-shaking menaces and galaxy conquerors, as they had at the beginning; unlike the one-issue Silver Age tales, however, these stories usually took four to six issues to tell. "Hot" creators came and went on the series; *JLA* held its own in sales. This time the lineup included Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Flash, Green Lantern, and Plastic Man, although membership would grow and expand to include many of DC's large roster of heroes, including Huntress, Steel, Zauriel, Aztek, Tomorrow Woman, Orion, and many others. More recently, a new Hourman, Faith, and Manitou Raven (a redesign of cartoon *Super Friends* member Apache Chief) have joined. This League operated from the Watchtower, a high-tech base on the moon, and ex-Batgirl Oracle helped them with information for their missions.

With its own series a solid seller for DC Comics, *JLA* was free to branch out again. A maxiseries of *JLA: Year One* (1998) retold the formative year of the team, retroactively inserting Black Canary in Wonder Woman's spot, according to revised DC continuity. In 2003, a miniseries called *Formerly Known as the Justice League* reunited the "comedy-era" team of DeMatteis, Giffen, and Maguire to relate new adventures of the second-rate squad. The series was a surprise sales hit, and further volumes were announced. Writer Paul Dini and painter Alex Ross also delivered a treat to fans with the tabloid-sized *JLA: Secret Origins* (2002) and *JLA: Liberty and Justice* (2003). And a new comic book series debuted in January 2002; based on the popular *Justice League* cartoon series, this comic targeted a younger audiences, and was titled *Justice League Adventures*.

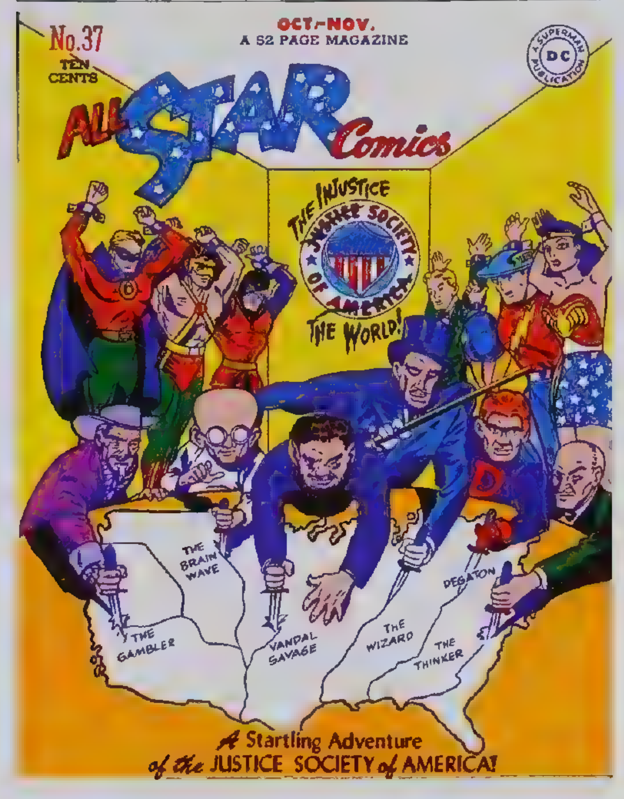
Following the success of *Batman: The Animated Series* and *Superman: The Animated Series*, Bruce Timm, Paul Dini, and Alan Burnett pitched a *Justice League* series in 1998. The following year, Warner Bros. commissioned the show for the Cartoon Network. *Justice League* played it straight when it debuted on November 1, 2001. The core group included Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern/John Stewart, Martian Manhunter, Flash, and Hawkgirl. In 2004, the *Justice League* animated series was revised and retitled *Justice League Unlimited;* many more DC universe superheroes joined the League in this version, which ran for three more seasons. Since then there have been direct-to-video animated films, including *Justice League: The New Frontier* (2008), based on writer/artist Darwyn Cooke's critically acclaimed comics series, and *Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths* (2010). And a version of the Justice League has appeared on several episodes of the live action television series *Smallville,* including Aquaman, Black Canary, Cyborg, Green Arrow, Impulse, and the Martian Manhunter.

A new *Justice League of America* comics series began in 2006, initially written by crime novelist Brad Meltzer, and continued by the late Dwayne McDuffie, who was one of the leading writers of the *Justice League* animated series. The JLA now had two headquarters: a satellite known as the new Watchtower orbiting the Earth, and the Hall of Justice, in Washington D. C., inspired by the Hall of Justice in the *Super Friends* TV show.

In 2011, DC Comics announced that it was relaunching its entire line of comics, starting with the new *Justice League* #1, published on August 31, 2011. Written by Geoff Johns and drawn by Jim Lee, it features a roster including Aquaman, Batman, Cyborg, the Flash, Green Lantern, Superman, and Wonder Woman, among others. —*AM & PS*

Justice Society of America

It's a rare superhero team that can be said to have created a whole genre, but the Justice Society of America (JSA) did just that in the pages of *All Star Comics*. Simply put, they were the first superteam in comics history—the first time that su-



All Star Comics #37 © 1947 DC Comics. (Cover art by Irwin Hasen.)

perheroes banded together to fight a common foe. The team's origin has its roots in the confusing development of DC Comics or, to be more precise, in the creation of its sister company, All-American Publications. In 1939, DC owner Harry Donenfeld joined forces with industry pioneer Max (M. C.) Gaines to form an offshoot called All-American, which would have its own editorial base (led by chief editor Sheldon Mayer) and its own characters. Within two years of the company's creation its self-titled publication *All-American Comics* had amassed a formidable roster of heroes, including the Flash, Hawkman, Johnny Thunder, Green Lantern, the Atom, and Dr. Mid-Nite.

All Star Comics was one of many Golden Age (1938–1954) anthology comics stuffed to the gills with superheroes, but with its third issue (Winter 1940) the decision was made to put them all together into a team. Mayer and writer Gardner Fox combined their own All-American heroes with some of DC's characters, notably Dr. Fate, Hourman, Sandman, and the Spectre, and the Justice Society of America was born. For its first few years, the strip featured individual adventures of the various heroes (often drawn by their regular creative teams), usually pitted against a common foe, culminating in the group all meeting up in the last few pages. With a length of up to fifty-eight pages, the tales had an epic quality that captivated readers, despite the occasionally crude artwork. The momentum of World War II only increased the comic's excitement as the team took on the Axis hordes and even went so far as to join the army (where they were also occasionally known as the Freedom Battalion).

Early on, management decided to showcase those heroes without their own comics, which is why Batman and Superman were notable absentees. And, as Flash and Green Lantern gained their own titles, they were eased out, as was Hourman (to make way for DC's big hope of 1942, Starman). Issue #8 saw the first appearance anywhere of All-American's biggest star, Wonder Woman, who was inducted into the group a few issues later, although she mostly had to make do with being the team secretary until issue #39! In late 1944, the comic witnessed a bigger upheaval when All-American owner Gaines split from DC over a row with DC owner Harry Donenfeld (who had given half of his share of All-American to DC's accountant, Jack Liebowitz). Consequently, DC regulars the Spectre and Starman were booted out (joining recent evictees Sandman and Dr. Fate, who had just seen their own solo series canceled). A year later, Gaines sold out his share in the company to Donenfeld, and All-American was formally merged with DC. Surprisingly, however, the Justice Society remained wholly made up of All-American heroes to its end.

Following the successful debut of the Justice Society, DC launched a second superhero team, the Seven Soldiers of Victory, also known as the Law's Legionnaires. Created by writer Mort Weisinger and legendary artist Mort Meskin, the Seven Soldiers team first appeared in *Leading Comics* #1 (Winter 1941). The team included the Crimson Avenger, the Green Arrow and his kid sidekick Speedy, the Shining Knight, the Star-Spangled Kid and his sidekick Stripesy, and the Vigilante.

By the mid-1940s, *All Star Comics* was at its peak, with the return of the Flash and Green Lantern, improved art from such young talents as

Alex Toth, Carmine Infantino, and Joe Kubert, and scripts from Fox, Robert Kanigher, and John Broome. The JSA had also amassed a formidable array of foes, including the Wizard, the Brain Wave, Degaton, Vandal Savage, the Psycho Pirate, and the Injustice Society; they would all serve as the team's principle enemies for decades to come. Wildcat and Mr. Terrific (both from the pages of *Sensation Comics*) made fleeting appearances in 1945, but it was the Black Canary (introduced to the team three years later, in issue #38) who was to be the last significant new member. DC canceled almost all its superhero books in 1949, but *All Star Comics* hung on for a few years longer as the last refuge for All-American's once-cherished superheroes. Their final appearance came in issue #57 in 1951, and with the following issue the comic was retitled *All-Star Western,* signaling the end of an era.

In the ensuing years, the JSA became the focus for much of comic fandom and was the subject of numerous fanzine articles. When DC started reviving its long-lost heroes in the late 1950s, the team was the inspiration behind the Justice League of America, who in turn inspired Marvel Comics' Fantastic Four. Soon, the clamor for the JSA inspired Julius Schwartz (the JSA's final editor, and then-current editor of the Justice League) to reintroduce the Society in a two-part team-up with the League in 1963. Schwartz and writer Fox rationalized the JSA's reappearance by establishing that they were in fact from a parallel planet—called Earth-Two—which was apparently where all the 1940s and early 1950s DC/All-American adventures had actually taken place.

The Justice League story proved to be so popular that Schwartz decided to make the team-up an annual event, which was to last until 1985. The Justice Society members featured in the team-ups hailed from various periods of the strip, seemingly chosen at random. Previously little-seen characters, such as Wildcat, Superman (the Earth-Two version), Hourman, and Mr. Terrific became regulars, and the Earth-Two Robin was introduced to the team. These crossovers sparked interest in the individual heroes, leading to more guest appearances in such comics as *The Flash, Green Lantern, Atom,* and *The Brave and the Bold,* while the Spectre was given his own, short-lived title (the first of many Spectre series). Finally, the groundswell of affection for the team culminated in *All Star Comics* being revived in 1976 with issue #58 (ignoring the many issues of *All-Star Western*), twenty five years after their last Golden Age adventure.

However, the new *All-Star* was no mere exercise in nostalgia. Writer Gerry Conway introduced a new group of younger heroes: the Star-Spangled Kid, Robin, and a new superheroine, Superman's feisty and flirtatious cousin, Powergirl. This new group called themselves the Super Squad. The intergenerational conflict between the aging JSA and the Super Squad enlivened a well-crafted comic, with the grizzled ex-boxer Wildcat (something of a bit player in the 1940s) emerging as a star at last. In its later years, the Justice Society had become a rare showcase for powerful female characters; both Wonder Woman and Black Canary took prominent roles. Similarly, the new *All-Star* featured strong women: In addition to Powergirl, the comic also starred the much darker Huntress (introduced in issue #69), a.k.a. Helena Wayne, later revealed to be the daughter of Batman and Catwoman. The Huntress went on to her own backup in *Wonder Woman* and *Batman Family,* as well as numerous Batman titles, a couple of her own series in the 1990s, and a starring role in the *Birds of Prey* title. Unfortunately, she could not inspire the public to buy *All-Star Comics,* and it was canceled with issue #74, while the JSA briefly moved over to the pages of *Adventure Comics,* where the Earth-Two Batman was killed off. Undeterred by this setback, DC still had faith in the team and, over the next two decades, no fewer than ten Justice Society–inspired titles were launched.

Of the many fans who clamored for the team's revival in the early 1960s, Roy Thomas (then editor of the legendary fanzine *Alter Ego*) was one of the most vocal. In the years that followed, he rose to become the editor-in-chief and one of the top writers at Marvel Comics, but by 1981 he was looking to make his mark at DC, and his first project involved his beloved Justice Society, albeit somewhat tangentially. *All-Star Squadron* was set at the dawn of World War II. Its title team included not only the Justice society members, but also virtually every early 1940s superhero from DC, All-American, and rival company Quality Comics. Over its six-year existence, its focus was on those Golden Age stars passed over by *All-Star Comics*. The team contained old DC heroes Johnny Quick, Robotman, Liberty Belle, the Tarantula, and the Shining Knight, plus a new female version of the Quality Comics hero Firebrand, and one new creation, Amazing Man—the first African American hero set in that era. Much as he had done with Marvel's Invaders, Thomas wove ancient strands of comic book continuity with historical events and military set pieces to fine effect.

The success of these Earth-Two heroes inspired Thomas to revive their contemporary adventures and, possibly inspired by the Super Squad, he created Infinity Inc., together with artist Jerry Ordway. Infinity Inc. characters were the offspring of various superheroes who had been rejected by the "grown up" JSA. They had banded together to prove their elders and betters wrong. The team consisted of Fury (daughter of Wonder Woman), the Silver Scarab and Northwind (son and godson respectively of Hawkman), Nuklon (godson of the Atom), Jade and Obsidian (Green Lantern's children), and Brainwave Junior, along with disaffected younger JSA-ers Power Girl, Huntress, and Star Spangled Kid. Slick, modern, and fast-moving, the comic was a fine companion to the All-Star Squadron, and later introduced new incarnations of Hourman, Dr. Mid-Nite, and Wildcat. However, all was not well in the DC boardroom.

The powers-that-be had been wary about the sheer volume of past history that their heroes were carrying, and felt that their whole line needed to be simplified and updated. In the wake of the creation of the Earth-Two concept, several other alternative universes had sprung up, including Earth-X for the heroes bought from Quality Comics, Earth-S for Captain Marvel, and even Earth Prime for our own world. DC decided that they all had to go, and in the 1985 *Crisis on Infinite Earths* miniseries the various worlds were merged, and numerous comics were given "year-one" relaunches. But if the (heroic) world began in 1985, where did that leave the old Justice Society with their Golden Age counterparts of Wonder Woman, Superman, et al.? Thomas countered this confusion with yet another wartime comic—the *Young All-Stars*—starring stand-ins for the now unusable old stars. However, this did not quite catch on. By 1989, the last of the JSA-inspired comics was canceled, killed by the confusion created in the wake of the series that was meant to end confusion.

The early 1990s saw a few tentative steps toward reviving the Justice Society, first in 1991 with a nostalgic 1950s era miniseries, followed a year later by a last, present-day outing for the original team. (Incidentally, both series were titled *Justice Society of America*, the only time they appeared in a comic with that name.) That second series unflinchingly, lovingly, and wittily starred a team of now elderly heroes. However, this was not what DC wanted to see, and the comic lasted a mere ten issues. In the 1994 miniseries *Zero Hour* (another failed attempt at simplification), numerous group members were either killed off altogether (Dr. Mid-Nite, Hawkman, and the Atom) or aged to doddering infirmity.

Salvation came in the form of British writer James Robinson, who had made a splash with his 1993 miniseries *The Golden Age* (an imaginary story set in the 1940s). He rekindled interest in the old team, in 1999, with a series called *The Justice Society Returns*. This was followed immediately by a regular series simply called *JSA*, which began unpromisingly with the death (of old age, for once) of yet another team member, the Sandman, but went on to become not only a success but also a worthy tribute to the venerable group. Original members the Flash, Green Lantern (renamed Sentinel), and Wildcat were joined by new incarnations of Dr. Fate, the Spectre, Dr. Mid-Nite, et al., along with Infinity Inc. alumni Brainwave and Nuklon (now known as Atom Smasher) and a female Star Spangled Kid (step-daughter of Stripesy, the original Kid's sidekick).

DC launched a new *Justice Society of America* series, initially written by Geoff Johns and drawn by Dale Eaglesham, with covers magnificently painted by Alex Ross, which ran from 2006 to 2011. This time the emphasis was on longtime JSA members, the original versions of the Flash, Green Lantern and Wildcat, training new young superheroes. A short-lived companion series, *JSA All-Stars*, ran from 2009 to 2011, featuring characters such as Power Girl and Stargirl. (Previously, in 2005, writer Grant Morrison had introduced a new version of the Seven Soldiers. This team included the Bulleteer, the Frankenstein monster, Klarion the Witchboy [created by Jack Kirby], the Manhattan Guardian, the third Mister Miracle [Shilo Norman], and the magician Zatanna.)

The Justice Society guest starred in "Absolute Justice," a two-part story written by Geoff Johns in the live action television series *Smallville* in 2010. Members who appeared included Doctor Fate, Hawkman, Stargirl, and the Star-Spangled Kid, with others appearing in their civilian identities in cameos. The Justice Society also guest starred in "The Golden Age of Justice!," a 2010 episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. The roster included Black Canary I and II, Doctor Mid-Nite, the Flash, Hawkman, Hourman, and Wildcat.

The old heroes (such as the Flash, Wildcat, and Hawkman) may have been simplistic by contemporary standards, but they personified an uncomplicated, heroic, essentially moral sense of the world—quite refreshing in the twenty-first century. In its various incarnations, the JSA and its offshoots have proved to be remarkably resistant to the periodic waves of "relevance" and nastiness that have afflicted the comics world from time to time. In some respects, the group represents DC's past (and that of comics in general), and as much as the company may try to kill off the characters, or in some way expunge the ponderous baggage of their long history (more than sixty years and counting), somehow they keep on coming back, and enriching new generations of readers. *—DAR & PS*

Kirby: Genesis

Jack Kirby was, arguably, the most prolific and imaginative creator of new characters and concepts in the history of the superhero genre. But he did not own the most celebrated characters whom he created by himself or in partnership with others. Instead, in the cases of Captain America, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, and the original X-Men, they are controlled by Marvel Comics or, in the case of the New Gods, DC Comics.

Kirby's situation changed, late in his career, with the rise of independent comics companies in the 1980s. One of the first independent publishers, Pacific Comics, commissioned new comics series from Kirby and allowed him to retain ownership of his creation. As a result, Pacific published the new series *Captain Victory and the Galactic Rangers,* written and drawn by Kirby, whose first issue had a cover date of November 1981. Captain Victory was the leader of the Galactic Rangers, a team of law enforcers operating in outer space. One unusual aspect of the series was that Captain Victory was, in a sense, immortal: if he was killed in combat, he was replaced by a clone of himself. Kirby hinted in the series that Captain Victory was the son of Orion, the leading hero in *The New Gods* series he had created at DC.

At Pacific, Kirby also wrote and drew another series, *Silver Star,* whose first issue had a cover date of February 1983. Like *The X-Men* and *The Eternals,* which he had done at Marvel, and *The New Gods,* which he had created at DC, *Silver Star* was a series about a race of superhumans. Scientist Bradford Miller genetically engineered a new species of humanity, *Homo geneticus,* designed to be capable of surviving some future worldwide disaster. (The mutants in *X-Men* are known as *Homo superior.*) One of them is his son, Morgan Miller, whose superpowers emerged when he was a soldier in combat in the Vietnam War. Hence Morgan became known as Silver Star, after the military medal for valor in battle. His nemesis is another superhuman, Darius Drumm, who is determined to wipe out not only *Homo geneticus* but also all life on earth.

Silver Star was the last new comics series that Jack Kirby created, wrote, and drew. His final comics project that he completely wrote and drew was *The Hunger Dogs* (1985), a graphic novel that brought his *New Gods* saga to a conclusion.

In the 1990s, Topps Comics licensed Captain Victory, Silver Star, and various characters that Kirby had developed but not yet published. The result was Topps' short-lived "Kirbyverse" line of comics, which debuted in 1993. *Jack Kirby's Secret City Saga* revealed that a civilization known as the Ninth Men had existed before recorded history. Three of the Ninth Men emerged from suspended animation to become superheroes in the present, each starring in his or her single issue comic: Captain Glory, the female NightGlider, and Bombast. A band of superpowered teenagers starred in *Jack Kirby's Teenagents,* and a team of villains serving the devil were the title characters of *Satan's Six.* There were also revivals of *Captain Victory* and *Silver Star,* which lasted only one issue each.

The Kirbyverse comics were written and drawn by such comics veterans as Roy Thomas, Kurt Busiek, Steve Ditko, Don Heck, and Keith Giffen. Jack Kirby passed away in 1994 at the age of 76.

Recently, Dynamite Entertainment licensed the rights from Kirby's heirs to all the characters he had created but not sold to Marvel, DC, or others. Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross then co-created and co-plotted the comics series *Kirby: Genesis,* which Dynamite began publishing in 2011. Busiek scripted the series, Ross did layouts for the art, and Jack Herbert and Ross did the finished art. *Kirby: Genesis* includes Captain Victory, Silver Star, and a revamped version of the Teenagents. But it also introduces many characters that Busiek and Ross developed from character designs and notes that Kirby had made throughout his career. As a result *Kirby: Genesis* presents an entire "universe" of characters either created by Kirby or based on his concepts, that is grander in scope than Topps' Kirbyverse was.

Busiek and Ross's most celebrated previous collaboration was on the acclaimed 1994 limited series *Marvels,* which presented characters and events from Marvel Comics from 1939 to 1973, as witnessed by an "ordinary" person, photojournalist Phil Sheldon. Busiek and Roger Stern wrote the 2008 sequel, *Marvels: Eye of the Camera,* which again focused on Sheldon. —*PS*

League of Extraordinary Gentlemen

Believing that nineteenth century fantasy and science fiction stories had been a strong influence on the development of the superhero genre, British author Alan Moore decided to devise what he called a "Justice League of Victorian England." The result was that Moore and artist Kevin O'Neill created the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, who debuted in the first issue of the series by that name, published by WildStorm as part of its America's Best Comics imprint in 1999.

In the original series (Volume One, 1999–2000), set in 1898, Mina Murray, the heroine of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897), is assigned by British intelligence agent Campion Bond to organize the League. The other members are Captain Nemo, from Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870); Allan Quatermain, the explorer-hero from H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and other books; Dr. Henry Jekyll, alias Edward Hyde, from Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886); and Hawley Griffin, the title character of H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* (1897). Hyde and Griffin have actual superpowers, and O'Neill draws Hyde as resembling the Hulk, a character who was inspired by Stevenson's story. In Volume One, the League intervenes in a war between two of literature's first supervillains: Professor James Moriarty, the archenemy of Sherlock Holmes, and an unnamed Asian "Doctor," who presumably is Dr. Fu Manchu.

As Moore and O'Neill developed the series, they decided that it would depict an alternate Earth on which virtually every fictional character in literature and other media exists. Hence, every character with a speaking role in the League stories is either a character from another fictional work, or related to such a character. (For example, Campion Bond is the grandfather of James Bond.) In Volume 2 (2002–2003), the League battles the Martian invaders from H. G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898).

Moore established that the Victorian League was the third incarnation of the team. The original League was founded in the seventeenth century by the sorcerer Prospero, from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). Among other members were the sprite Ariel and monstrous Caliban (both from *The Tempest*); Christian, the hero of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678); Don Quixote, from Cervantes' two-volume novel, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* (1605–1615); and the immortal Orlando, from Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel, *Orlando: A Biog-*

(L to R) Naseeruddin Shah as Captain Nemo, Stuart Townsend as Dorian Gray, Tony Curran as the Invisible Man, and Sean Connery as Allan Quartermain in the 2003 movie adaptation of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen.* (20th Century-Fox / The Kobal Collection.)

raphy. Lemuel Gulliver, the hero of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), founded the second League in the eighteenth century, which included Orlando; Dr. Christopher Syn, alias the Scarecrow, from Russell Thorndike's series of novels (1915–1944); Sir Percy Blakeney, alias the Scarlet Pimpernel, from Baroness Orzcy's 1905 play/novel (and his wife); Natty Bumppo, the frontiersman hero of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826); and Fanny Hill, from John Cleland's 1748 erotic novel of the same name.

Mina Murray and Allan Quatermain both acquired immortality and eternal youth, and hence remained active in the twentieth century. The principal story of *The Black Dossier* (2007) deals with Murray and Quatermain's exploits in 1958, in which they contend against disguised versions of James Bond and Mrs. Emma Peel from television's *The Avengers*. This would be the last League comic published by DC, as Moore severed all ties to the company.

Volume Three of League, now published by Top Shelf Productions (USA) and Knockabout Comics (UK), is titled *Century* and consists of three graphic novels, with a continuing plot about the attempt by occultists to create a "Moonchild." Part 1, published in 2009, is set in 1910, and primarily concerns Janni, the daughter and successor of Captain Nemo, who proves to be "Pirate Jenny" from Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928). The 1910 League consists of Murray; Quatermain; Orlando; A. J. Raffles, the gentleman thief created in 1898 by E. W. Hornung; and Thomas Carnacki, an occult detective created in 1910 by William Hope Hodgson. Part 2, set in 1969, was published in 2011, and Part 3, set in the early twentieth century, is scheduled to be published in 2012.

A film adaptation of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen,* starring Sean Connery as Quatermain, was released in 2003. But it was negatively reviewed by critics and publicly repudiated by Moore.

Although Alan Moore has otherwise retired from writing comics, the League is the exception to his rule, and he intends to continue collaborating with Kevin O'Neill on future League stories. *—PS*

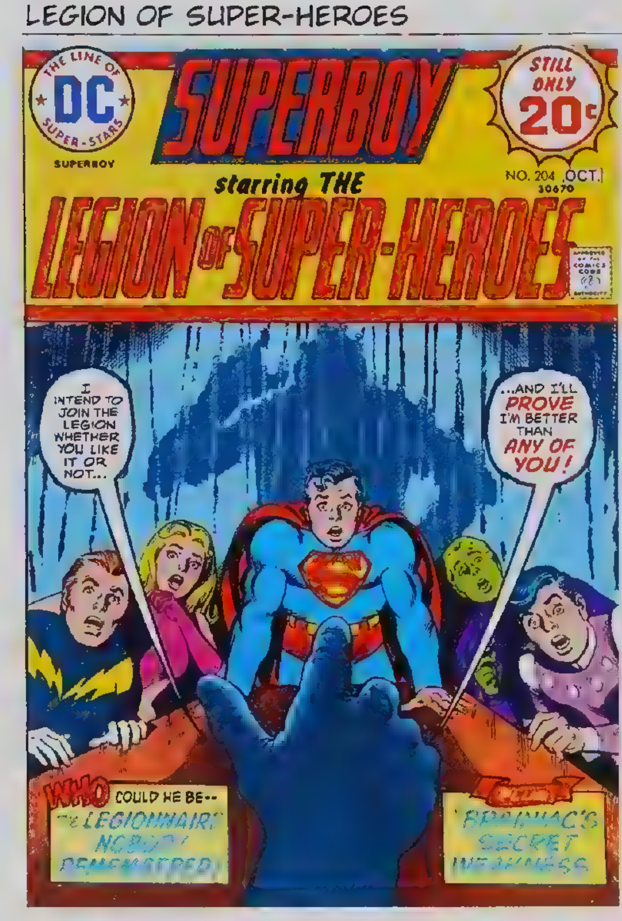
Legion of Super-Heroes

Every kid needs friends, and Superboy, the prodigious youth starring in DC Comics' "Adventures of Superman When He Was a Boy," was certainly no exception. Enter the Legion of Super-Heroes (LSH): the magnetically-powered Cosmic Boy, the mind-reading Saturn Girl, and the electricity-generating Lightning Boy, who materialized in DC Comics' *Adventure Comics* #247 (1958). Hailing from the future—the thirtieth century, to be exact—this teenage trio time-travels to Superboy's era to recruit him into their club. Thanks to the Legion's time "bubble," the Boy of Steel finds himself in his hometown of Smallville, one thousand years hence, where his new superpals are only part of a larger clique (although the other young heroes' faces are shadowed) whose headquarters (their clubhouse) is an upside-down spaceship resembling a prop from a late 1950s sci-fi movie. The Legion's entire depiction of the future smacks of the post–atomic age's vision of the world of tomorrow: Robot factories, jet packs, and yes, even flying cars abound! After proving himself a "super-good sport" by surviving a rigged initiation (hoaxes were popular story gimmicks during this era in the Superman comics), Superboy is sworn in as a Legionnaire and returns home to proudly show his father, Pa Kent, a prize ribbon decreeing him "Super-Hero Number One."

Mort Weisinger, editor of the Superman family of titles, intended *Adventure* #247's tale "The Legion of Super-Heroes" as nothing more than a throwaway. Readers had other ideas, however, and mail demanding that the Legion return flooded the DC offices. Twenty issues later, they were back (with Lightning *Boy* rechristened as the alliterative Lightning *Lad*), and before long the LSH also encountered Supergirl (on yet another recruitment mission). The Legion's roster expanded with more superteens whose heroic names easily identified their powers: Chameleon Boy, Colossal Boy, Invisible Kid, Phantom Girl, and Triplicate Girl. Issues cover-spotlighting LSH members sold so well that "Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes" bumped "Tales of the Bizarro World" out of *Adventure* and became a regular monthly feature beginning with issue #300 (September 1962), and before long the Legion ultimately seized the entire title from co-star Superboy.

Soon the Legion became truly that, with an enormous cast including, but not limited to, Ultra Boy, Superboy's "brother" Mon-El, Brainiac 5 (the descendent of Superman's android enemy), Sun Boy, Star Boy, Shrinking Violet, Lightning (later Light) Lass, Bouncing Boy, and, believe it or not, Matter-Eater Lad, as well as standbys the Legion of Substitute Heroes and the Legion of Super-Pets. Science remained a major element in the tales, with some upgrades along the way, like the Legion's original jet packs being replaced by anti-gravity belts. And a rogues' gallery, including the Time Trapper, the Legion of Super-Villains, and even the twentieth century's Lex Luthor, began to appear and reappear.

While simple in concept, the early Legion of Super-Heroes series was surprisingly complex for its time. Its pretense as a superhero "club" veiled its true message of brotherhood—members of the LSH migrated from a variety of worlds across the galaxy, which had banded together as the United Planets and shared a common language, Interlac. This interplanetary harmony, however, reflected the Anglo-centric thinking of the late 1950s and early 1960s: Despite their otherworldly origins, every Legionnaire was white, except for the orange-skinned, pointy-eared Chameleon Boy and the green-skinned Brainiac 5. Basing itself in thirtieth-century Metropolis (not Smallville, as in the LSH's initial outing), the Legion was often aided in its protection of Earth by the high-tech Science Police. The LSH operated under a strict constitution, which stipulated, among other things, a maximum age of eighteen, the annual appointment of an acting leader (who was chosen by the vote of the readers), and an expulsion provision (several Legionnaires were debarred in solemn hearings). Weisinger printed stories that revealed the dangerous consequences of superheroics: In an early battle, Lightning Lad lost an arm, and later his life (although he soon returned from the dead), and one of Triplicate Girl's three bodies was destroyed by the


THE LINE OF DC SUPER-STARS
SUPERBOY
STILL ONLY 20¢
NO. 204 OCT.
30670
starring THE
LEGION of SUPER-HEROES
I INTEND TO JOIN THE LEGION WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT...
...AND I'LL PROVE I'M BETTER THAN ANY OF YOU!
WHO COULD HE BE--
THE LEGIONNAIRE NOBODY REMEMBERED!
BRAINIAC'S SECRET WEAKNESS

Superboy #204 © 1974 DC Comics. (Cover art by Nick Cardy.)

menacing machine called Computo, leaving her Duo Damsel.

Throughout the mid-1960s, the Legion's popularity grew, and the series cultivated a loyal and often vociferous fan base, including a teen named Jim Shooter. Shooter lobbied editor Weisinger for work by pitching crudely illustrated, but boldly imaginative stories, and soon the young scribe was authoring the LSH feature in *Adventure*. Frequently paired with penciler Curt Swan, best known as "the" Superman artist of the 1960s (who disliked drawing LSH because of its sizeable cast and asked that his Legion stories feature smaller numbers of characters), Shooter's LSH run in *Adventure* was noteworthy due to its development of the young heroes' personalities: Each cast member was individually and consistently characterized, from Lightning Lad's impulsiveness to newcomer Princess Projectra's (actual royalty!) snobbishness. The Legionnaires often referred to each other by their otherworldly civilian names—for examples, Cosmic Boy/Rokk Krinn, Chameleon Boy/Reep Daggle, and Shrinking Violet/Salu Digby—and as the series progressed, more was revealed about their parents, siblings, and home planets. Under Shooter's tenure, Legion mainstays like flight rings, the merciless magician Mordru, and the fearsome Fatal Five entered the lore. By the late 1960s, Shooter and Swan vacated the thirtieth century, bringing the Legion's first glory days to a close, and the series hobbled along with no true creative direction until being ousted from *Adventure Comics* by Supergirl beginning in issue #381 (June 1969), and temporarily demoted to the backup spot in *Action Comics*, before being retired.

The Legion didn't lay dormant for long, returning in 1971 as a backup in *Superboy* before later taking over the title (again). The LSH enjoyed its second heyday in the 1970s: Hot new artists like Dave Cockrum and Mike Grell became fan favorites on the series, the heroes' garb was modernized (Phantom Girl wore bell bottoms and Element Lad sported a perm), and new characters like Wildfire and Tyroc (the first black member to break the LSH's color barrier) joined the team. The Legionnaires aged to their late teens, and romances took root, with several members even getting married. Science fiction influences intensified, and the dated futuristic vision of the 1960s was replaced by technological marvels, including an expansive headquarters with a full training facility, and warring alien races that defied the laws of the United Planets. With its intricate themes and scientific inspirations, *Legion of Super-Heroes* became the comic book equivalent of *Star Trek*, and continued to boast a loyal fan following.

Writer Paul Levitz began a lengthy run on *Legion* in 1982, and along with artist Keith Giffen made the series DC's second best-selling title, trailing the company's top hit, *The New Teen Titans*. Levitz and Giffen's most celebrated Legion storyline, "The Great Darkness Saga," employed twentieth-century villain Darkseid as the future team's antagonist. Legionnaires came and went, married and had children, and the series matured, evolving away from its unsophisticated original concept of a club for superkids. But throughout myriad changes, one constant remained: Superboy, a recurring and popular member. Then came John Byrne.

Writer/artist Byrne was Marvel Comics' "fix-it" man, having resuscitated several failing titles for DC's chief competitor. Hired by DC to orchestrate a highly anticipated Superman relaunch that commenced with the miniseries *The Man of Steel* (1986), Byrne excised Superboy from the Superman mythos, forcing the Legion to readjust without its core member. It was explained that a Superboy from an alternate, "pocket" universe was the Legion's teammate, not the younger self of the "real" Superman (and then the young hero flew into comics limbo). With this revision—perceived as contrived by some, convoluted by others—the Legion began to stray even further from its kid-friendly roots. Frequent tie-ins to twentieth-century continuity, including team-ups with Superman and a spinoff series called *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89* (later *'90*, then *'91*, etc., before getting the boot in 1994), made the LSH franchise harder to follow.

A 1989 *Legion of Super-Heroes* reboot featured an older and less optimistic Legion, sans costumes and codenames, in a densely plotted series occurring immediately after a then-unexplained "five-year gap" in story continuity (although details would later emerge). Giffen was the chief architect of this version of *Legion*, applauded by sci-fi aficionados for its intricacy but ignored by readers yearning for softer, more accessible fare. In this incarnation, the future Earth was destroyed, and a more reader-friendly team featuring teen versions (presumed to be clones) of the now-adult Legion spun off into their own title in *Legionnaires* #1 (1993). This younger, hipper group kept some classic character names (Cosmic Boy and Saturn Girl) as a historical nod, updated others (Lightning Lad became Live Wire and Triplicate Girl, Triad), and introduced a new wave of members. Yet *Legionnaires*, and its companion title *Legion of Super-Heroes*, continued to build upon decades of already cluttered continuity, and readers—as well as editors and writers—were hopelessly confused. Housecleaning was in order.

Zero Hour: A Crisis in Time (1994) was DC's answer. This crossover, appearing throughout many of the publisher's superhero titles, readjusted DC's timeline, allowing for revisions including a restarted Legion. As of 2004, the LSH's comic was titled simply *The Legion*, and borrows the best rudiments of the *Legionnaires* redux in a science-heavy tapestry considerably darker in tone than the original concept.

A 2007 reboot actually restored the Legion's original, classic continuity, with the teenage Superman once more established as having been a member. Paul Levitz returned as the Legion's writer in a new comic series that began in 2010, and he went on to write the *Legion of Super-Heroes* monthly series, drawn by Francis Portela, that premiered in September 2011. A companion series, *Legion Lost*, debuted the same month.

Legion members Cosmic Boy, Saturn Girl, and Lightning Lad (respectively voiced by Jason Priestley, Melissa Joan Hart, and Chad Lowe), guest starred in a 1998 episode of *Superman: The Animated Series*. Brainiac 5 and Bouncing Boy appeared in a 2006 episode of the animated *Justice League Unlimited*, which had cameos by other Legionnaires. The *Legion of Super Heroes* animated series, which includes the young Superman, debuted on The CW network in 2006.

Cosmic Boy, Saturn Girl, and Lightning Lad made their live action debuts in "Legion," a 2009 episode of the television series *Smallville*, written by comics author Geoff Johns. Brainiac 5, played by James Marsters (Spike in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) later appeared in the series' 200th episode.

Beyond its sales peak in the early 1980s, the Legion of Super-Heroes has never risen to A-team status, probably due to its cumbersome cast and rich history. But the concept has commanded perhaps the most dedicated fan base of any DC series. —*ME & PS*

Lobo

The "grittification" of the comic book superhero—which began with Marvel Comics' Punisher in the 1970s and continued building toward an artistic peak in 1986 with DC Comics' *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*—went deliberately over the top in 1983 with the creation of Lobo. The misbegotten, chalk-white, black-clad brainchild of writer Roger Slifer and artist Keith Giffen, Lobo (who debuted in DC's *Omega Men* #3) embodies all that is nasty, raucous, and unsavory in the world of superpowered beings. Lobo, an antihero whose speech is peppered with ersatz expletives such as "frag," "fraggin'," "bastich," and "Feetal's Gizz!" (a reference to the gizzard of a particular individual), despises every decent thing usually associated with the typical comic book hero, including (but not limited to) short hair, square jaws, democracy, equality for women, equality for men, basic rights, flags, and the notion that good always trumps evil. He is extremely powerful, possessing enough raw strength to go toe-to-toe with members of the Green Lantern Corps (*L.E.G.I.O.N.* #4, 1989) and even Superman himself, which he has done at various points throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

Lobo has the ability to survive the rigors of airless space, the capacity to track individuals across thousands of light-years of empty space, and possesses his people's inborn power to clone himself from small amounts of tissue; this last ability, coupled with his rapid healing, renders him effectively unkillable, short of complete vaporization. It has been said that Lobo can never die permanently because he is considered too nasty to be admitted either to heaven or to hell (*Lobo's Back* #4, 1992). His "turn-ons" include drunkenness and mindless violence. Although he has demonstrated frightening mastery of all manner of weapons, sometimes going into combat with guns and grenades, Lobo is a street-brawler at heart, preferring to use either his fists or a large metal chain with a hook at one end. His most serious weakness is his tendency to continue a fight long past the point at which any rational person would retreat. But since most other beings in the universe fear Lobo, this seldom presents a serious problem for him. Because of the moral ambiguity that characterized many superhero comics published on the cusp of the new millennium, Lobo's status as a superhero (as opposed to a supervillain) is highly debatable; but his reluctant association with legitimate superhero teams—and the fact that he often does battle against miscreants who are even worse than he is—often places him on the side of the good guys, however marginally or unintentionally.

Born in 1599 C.E.. on the distant, idyllic planet Czarnia, a world that had never known conflict or strife of any kind, Lobo is pure, undistilled evil; indeed, his name is Khundish for "one who devours your entrails and thoroughly enjoys it" (any resemblance to a terrestrial word meaning "wolf" is completely fortuitous, as it turns out). Moments after his birth, Lobo makes his first attempt to live up to his name by biting off four of his midwife's fingers, driving the poor woman insane; Lobo then grabs a scalpel and attacks several doctors. Although no one on his homeworld knows for sure how, or why, such a malevolent serpent could appear in the Garden of Eden that is Czarnia, some theorize that Lobo's evil is perhaps a statistically inevitable counterbalance to an otherwise perfect, "evil-free" environment.

As Lobo matures, his evil steadily grows in intensity and sophistication. Consequently, the Czarnian body count rises in a steady tide. All attempts to appeal to Lobo's better nature fail simply because he lacks one (a claim Lobo himself often makes); all efforts to threaten Lobo fail because no one on Czarnia possesses any proficiency whatsoever in arms, violence, or even intimidation. As a toddler, Lobo forces Wolfman Wilf, the DJ of Cosmic Rock Zombie Radio, to play one song continuously: "I Killed My Folks (No Accident)" by Oedipus Wrecks. Lobo then commandeers a medical facility and forces its staff to implant a radio receiver into his brain, giving him unlimited exposure to the Wrecks' not-so-dulcet tones; he murders the doctors afterward and burns their clinic to the ground. At the tender age of five, Lobo rips out the throat of Egon N'g, his elementary school principal, during a fit of pique. "My faith in the natural goodness of the scheme of things has been severely shaken, if not totally destroyed," the dying principal writes to his countrymen, in his own blood (*Lobo* vol. 1 #1, 1990). "I rejoin the Universal One. Farewell, paradise! P.S.—For your own sake, create the concepts of police, punishment, and prison."

As a teenager, Lobo forms his own heavy metal band (The Main Man and the Several Scum-Buckets), which competes at the All-Czarnia 9-Octave Chime-Haiku Festival; the band's deadly decibels end up killing all of Lobo's musical side-men, electrocuting the contest's judges, and wreaking fiery mayhem on the audience—leaving Lobo peeved at his failure to take first prize. When Lobo reaches the age of eighteen, his evil finally engulfs all of Czarnia when his desire to be unique in all the universe leads him to genetically engineer an insidious, flesh-burrowing, flying insect that (very painfully) wipes out his entire species—except, of course, for Lobo himself, who merely laughs at the horrific carnage he has wrought (*Lobo* vol. 1 #1 and #4, 1990–1991; *Lobo* vol. 2 #0, 1994; *DC Universe Heroes Secret Files* #1, 1999).

Hopping onto his spacegoing motorcycle (actually a customized SpazFrag 666 single-seater superluminal spacecraft with a miniaturized turbocharged seventeen-liter power plant and a large-fanged skull mounted on the front), Lobo abandons his murdered homeworld to become the galaxy's most feared bounty hunter and assassin, a calling he pursues with great relish. At first, he specializes in "Dead or Alive" warrants, far preferring the former to the latter. He also sells his services to private clients, but can be relied upon to murder double-crossers and prospective clients who make insulting offers, or those who set him to tasks he finds boring; in Lobo's "plus" column, he tends to "stay bought" once hired, and the more violence a job entails, the likelier he is to work cheaply or even for free (he likes to chase people).

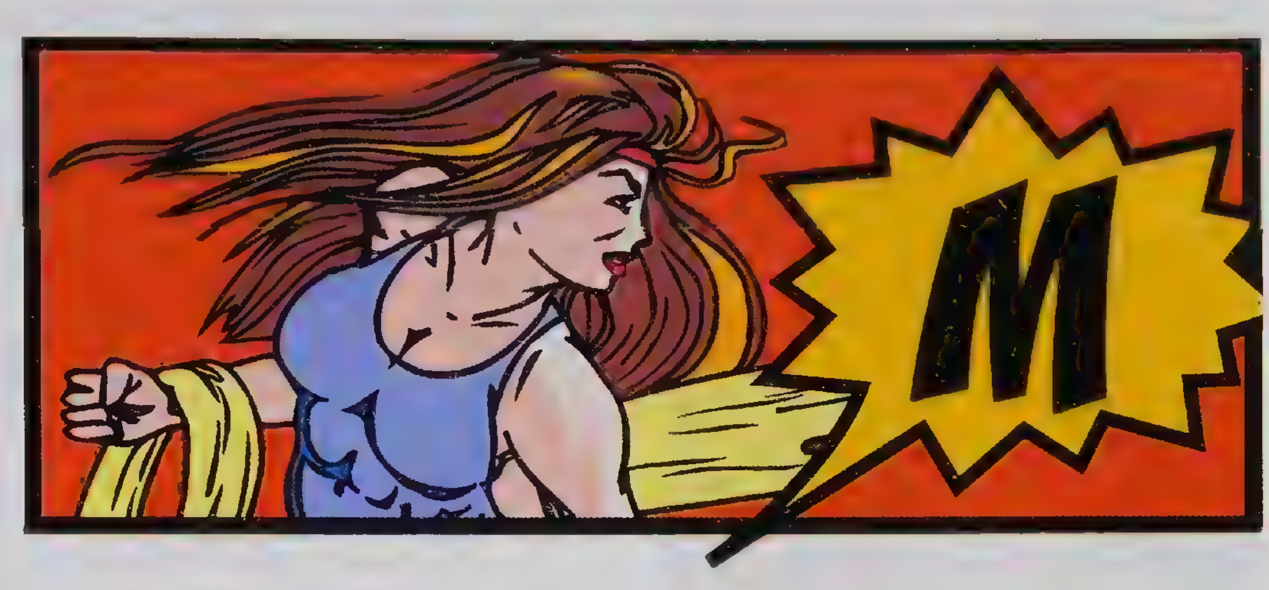
During his many unsavory manhunting missions, Lobo's few arguably redeeming characteristics become evident: his strict adherence to whatever promises he makes (he would prefer to kill the promisee than to renege on the promise itself), and his undying affection for his "fishies" (Lobo's term of endearment for the space dwelling dolphins that accompany him in his interstellar travels), whose safety he protects using all the considerable violence at his disposal; Lobo calls the creatures his "cutesy-wutesy flying cosmic-type dolphin buddies." After Garryn Bek of L.E.G.I.O.N. (Licensed Extra-Governmental Interstellar Operatives Network) accidentally kills one of Lobo's dolphins, the assassin comes after Bek, intent on slowly torturing him to death (*L.E.G.I.O.N.* #3, 1989).

Lobo eventually catches up to Bek and breaks his legs (*L.E.G.I.O.N.* #6, 1989), but along the way, he encounters L.E.G.I.O.N. member Vril Dox II, the adopted son of Superman's android nemesis, Brainiac. Although Lobo and Dox, being of similar temperament, get along at first, they inevitably come to superhuman blows. Distracted by the sudden disappearance of Cosmic Rock Zombie Radio from the radio built into his brain, Lobo loses the fight and is forced to accept the consequences of a wager he'd made with Dox: L.E.G.I.O.N. membership (*L.E.G.I.O.N.* #4, 1989). After exploiting Lobo's self-cloning powers by using several duplicate Lobos to defeat a galactic drug kingpin named Kanis-Biz, Dox poisons Lobo and his clones, de-powering them and removing their duplicative abilities. Lobo and one of his clones escape destruction by Dox's missiles, however (*L.E.G.I.O.N.* #7, 1989), and Lobo faces his last remaining clone in single combat on the planet Kannit. The original Lobo is presumably the winner, though the matter of the victor's identity isn't settled definitively (*Lobo* vol. 2 #9, 1994). Lobo (or his clone) later joins R.E.B.E.L.S. (the Revolutionary Elite Brigade to Eradicate L.E.G.I.O.N. Supremacy), a group formed by Dox after his renegade son, Lyrl, takes over L.E.G.I.O.N. (*R.E.B.E.L.S.* #1, 1994).

After Lyrl Dox's defeat, Vril Dox II releases Lobo from R.E.B.E.L.S. (*R.E.B.E.L.S.* #6, 1995), whereupon the assassin resumes concentrating on freelance bounty hunting and personal business. When the radio station to which his brain-mounted receiver is tuned changes to an all soul-music format (deep-sixing Lobo's omnipresent favorite song), Lobo sells his soul (as sullied as it is) to a villain named Neron in exchange for having the radio receiver removed from his cranium; Lobo then shoots the disc jockey responsible for this crisis and immolates the radio station (*Lobo* vol. 2 #22, 1995).

Throughout the 1990s, Lobo's image was everywhere, appearing on countless trading cards, T-shirts (images of Lobo saying "Bite Me, Fanboy" were quite popular), figurines (including a beautiful sculpture based upon art by fan-favorite British Lobo artist, Simon Bisley), buttons, and posters. He found his way into numerous best-selling comics miniseries and one-shot comics, including pairings with such DC mainstays as Superman, Batman, Deadman, and other companies' characters (such as Dark Horse's the Mask, Fleetway-Quality's Judge Dredd, and even an unholy one-issue merger with Marvel's Howard the Duck). Perhaps a victim of his own overexposure, Lobo's own ongoing series finally ended with issue #64 in 1999 (though a miniseries written by Giffen, *Lobo Unbound,* appeared in 2003 and 2004).

During Lobo's subsequent years on the guest-star circuit, variant replicas of the character have appeared, such as L'il Lobo, a "cute kid" version of the assassin (*Young Justice* #20, 2000), and Slo-Bo, a slower, weaker, genetically defective "wimpy" redaction of the much-feared assassin (*Young Justice* #38, 2001); these "tweaked" takes on Lobo were conceived by veteran comics writer and novelist Peter David and artist Todd Nauck, as a way of fixing what David has characterized as one of the "worst characters of all time." But these recent radical changes weren't the first ones Lobo has undergone; in 1992, he had been briefly reincarnated as a woman, and was even transformed into a squirrel for a short time (*Lobo's Back* #3). But whatever alterations Lobo's many creative handlers may have in store for him in the future, one core principle remains as dependable as the assassin's penchant for bad behavior: his dogged persistence. When Lobo is on the job, he allows absolutely nothing, and no one, to stand in his way. *—MAM*

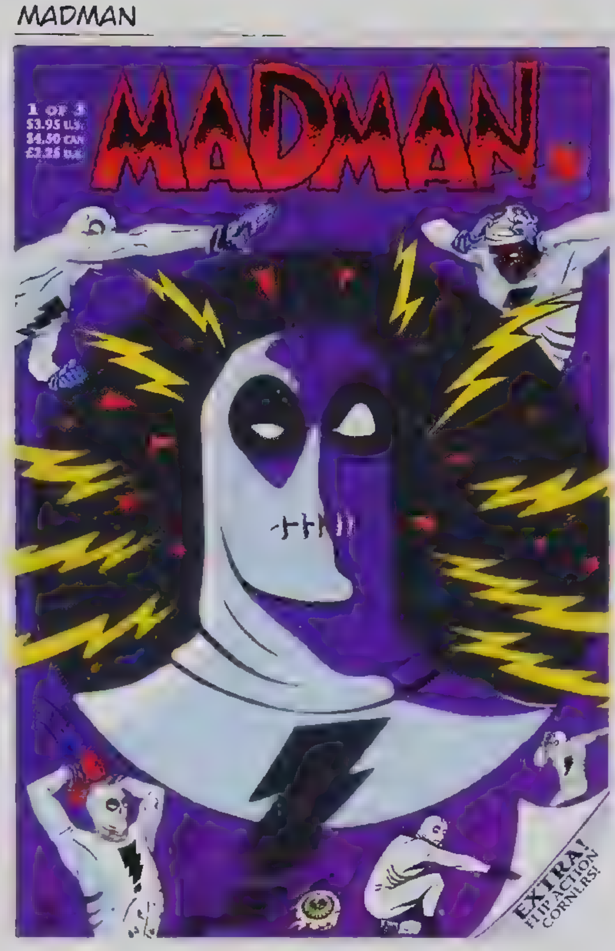


Madman

Of the scores of new superheroes introduced during the 1990s, Michael Dalton Allred's Madman is one of the hippest and most stylish. Rendered in a simple yet expressive manner—running decidedly counter to the stoic, over-embellished, and exaggeratedly muscular style that became endemic to mainstream superhero comics—Madman's premiere issue (*Madman* #1, Tundra, 1992) gave the world its first glimpse of Frank Einstein, the man behind the mask of Madman. Allred's creation, beautifully colored by his wife Laura, was one of the first superheroes designed for the ironic sensibilities of twenty-something postmodern comics readers—an audience that would undoubtedly show little interest in standard superhero fare.

Reanimated after death by Dr. Egon Boiffard and Dr. Gillespie Flem, a pair of mad scientists worthy of inclusion in the cast of *Buckaroo Banzai*, the man destined to become Madman awakens with almost no memories. Unable to recall his real identity, he adopts the name Frank Einstein (which sounds a little like "Frankenstein" if spoken too quickly); he also finds himself gifted with unpredictable psychic powers (including prophetic dreams and an intermittent sense of danger or security that Einstein describes as "spiritual inner eye awareness"), heightened agility, an apparently instinctual ability to survive being attacked, and an irrational hatred for beatniks. Clearly, Einstein's life isn't as simple as that of most mainstream superheroes. For starters, he is full of unanswered (and perhaps unanswerable) questions about his identity prior to his death. And being a reanimated corpse, he is rather unattractive. Einstein's personal insecurities and neuroses drive him to garb himself in a pajama-like white costume with a red lightning bolt/exclamation point motif; the outfit includes a white mask, intended for vanity's sake rather than for the protection of a secret identity. Despite his extraordinary abilities and his mask—worn only to bolster Madman's poor self-esteem—Einstein does not think of himself as a superhero.

After Dr. Boiffard dies at the hands of Monstadt, a lunatic seeking immortality, Einstein embarks on a desperate quest to restore life to his friend and benefactor, while also fighting to rescue his girlfriend, Joe (Josephine Lombard), and Dr. Flem from some menacing monsters. Succeeding in his mission, Einstein discovers his innate propensity for heroism, and begins routinely defending Snap City—an ultrahip metropolis that lies somewhere between the 1939 World's Fair retro-futurity of Scott McCloud's *Zot!* and the skyline of the Mort Weisenger–era Superman (not to mention Allred's own post–Grunge Pacific Northwest *milieu*)—from every imaginable super-menace. Because of his death-addled memory, Snap City is the only place Einstein can even vaguely remember having called home; he loves the town,


1 OF 3
$3.95 U.S.
$4.50 CAN
£2.25 U.K.
MADMAN
EXTRA!
FLIP ACTION
CORNERS!

Madman #1 © & ™ 1992 Michael Allred. (Cover art by Michael Allred.)

describing it as "a groovy place where just about *anything* can happen."

Immediately dubbed "the Madman of Snap City" because of his weird, corpselike appearance and his strange turns of phrase (fairly typical of Einstein are such utterances as "Meanies never win. And you can quote me on that."), Einstein finds himself regularly squaring off against rogue robots, late-show monsters (including a vomit-beast known as the Puke), and crazed beatniks, with a little help from gal-pal Joe and an alien called Mott (a native of the planet Hoople, a reference to one of Allred's favorite 1970s bands). Unlike virtually anyone else in the superhero trade, his signature weapons include a hollowed-out, lead-filled Duncan yo-yo and a slingshot, lending a fair amount of credence to the "Madman" moniker.

After producing six issues of *Madman* in a 1992 series for small-press publishers Tundra and Kitchen Sink (winning the 1993 Harvey Award for Best New Series), and three issues of *Madman Adventures* for Tundra in 1993, Allred took his concept to Dark Horse Comics, a haven for creator-owned properties since its founding in 1985. Dark Horse furnished Allred's stylishly bizarre hero with a much larger audience than ever before with a new series, *Madman Comics,* which debuted in 1994. Madman's new outing was well received despite frequent and lengthy lapses between issues, especially toward the end of its twenty-issue run (December 2000). Madman teamed up—and briefly switched bodies—with DC Comics' Superman in *Superman/Madman Hullabaloo!,* a three-issue miniseries released in 1997. Two years later, Dark Horse released *Madman/The Jam,* a two-issue miniseries that paired Allred and his character with another postmodern hero (with the participation of Bernie Mireault, the Jam's creator).

After nearly dying at Monstadt's hands in the horror-detective yarn presented in *Madman Comics: The G-Men from Hell* (four issues, 2000), Madman became part of Snap City's first superhero group in *The Atomics* (AAA Pop Comics, 2000). Allred wrote and drew this title with obvious affection for the Silver Age (1956–1969) artistic powerhouse Jack Kirby, though filtered through a postmodern, somewhat tongue-in-cheek lens. In *The Atomics,* Madman finally makes peace with the beatniks he has fought over the years, and helps change several of them from alien spore–infected mutants into a fledgling team of mismatched heroes, nostalgically reminiscent of early issues of Marvel Comics' *Fantastic Four* or *Avengers.* Among Madman's new super-companions are the stretchable Mister Gum (better known by Snap City's populace, unfortunately, as the Booger), the Slug (a purple mutant with protuberant eyestalks), the Iron Man–like Metalman, and the enigmatic and acne-afflicted teenage time-traveler known as Zap-Man. *The Atomics* concluded its run in 2001 after fifteen issues.

Unable to remain within the confines of comics and trade paperback reprints, Madman's likeness has found its way onto T-shirts, candy bars, lunch boxes, action figures, and even Zippo lighters. Hollywood has also taken notice of the character, with the release of *G-Men from Hell*

(2000), a Madman-based film directed by Christopher Coppola (brother of actor Nicolas Cage and nephew of director Francis Ford Coppola), from a screenplay written by Richard L. Albert and Michael Allred himself. Various Atomics characters, and Madman himself, have returned for one-shots from 2002 to the present, and another, big-budget *Madman* film from director Robert Rodriguez has been in development since the early 2000s. —*MAM*

Manhunter

In a career that has spanned some sixty years, and featured more changes than a chameleon, Manhunter's finest hour is still considered to be a revered, but brief, seven-part revival in the mid-1970s. Manhunter was launched in the already overcrowded pages of *Adventure Comics* #58 in 1941, as a sort of plain-clothes private eye who specialized in tracing missing persons. Those stories about Paul Kirk (the Manhunter of the title) were engaging enough, but the fans wanted superheroes, which is exactly what the incoming writer/artist team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby delivered. Following the death of a policeman friend, Kirk vows to avenge him and—between panels—conjures up a red costume with a blue mask, and sets about beating up all and sundry.

For the next eight issues, Simon and Kirby served up page after page of nonstop action, with the Manhunter taking on hoods, lowlifes, and the occasional Nazi. There were rarely any attempts at characterization or exposition; readers never learned what Kirk does to earn a living (beyond being either a big-game hunter or young sportsman) but as long as the stories were exciting, they didn't seem to care. However, when Simon and Kirby left the strip to concentrate on the Boy Commandoes, the life went out of the strip and it was soon canceled.

A month before DC's Manhunter first appeared, Quality Comics had introduced its own costumed Manhunter, whose real name was Dan Richards, and who debuted in *Police Comics* #8 (March 1942). While working at DC, Simon and Kirby also created *The Guardian and the Newsboy Legion* in *Star-Spangled Comics* #7 (April 1942), a popular series about a quartet of orphan boys, living in an urban slum, who were watched over by a policeman, Jim Harper, who was also the costumed-crime fighter, the Guardian. (Kirby introduced the Newsboy Legion's look-alike sons and a clone of the Guardian in the *Jimmy Olsen* comic in the 1970s.)

Thirty years later, in 1973, editor Archie Goodwin and young artist Walt Simonson started work on a series of short stories in the back of DC's *Detective Comics*, once again starring Paul Kirk/Manhunter. This revival recounted how Kirk had been injured in 1946 and kept in suspended animation by a secret cabal of scientists, until he was revived twenty-five years later as a sort of super-mercenary. Goodwin and Simonson had become fascinated with Japanese culture, and the strip is full of black-clad Ninjas, Shuriken throwing stars, and innovative multi-paneled storytelling. Even Manhunter's costume was revolutionary—a cross between a Samurai suit and an exoskeleton, complete with Mauser pistol and vicious knives. The story revolved around Manhunter turning on his masters and trekking halfway around the globe, through the Himalayas, Marakesh, and Constantinople, ending up in Gotham City in an inevitable tangle with Batman.

Mixing cinematic influences, tight plots, exciting art, and international espionage, the strip was an immense critical success, winning numerous fan awards. Fearful of lesser talents picking up the strip at a later date, Goodwin had the courage to kill off his Manhunter in a literally explosive finale. Even so, each decade since the strip's demise has fittingly seen a new collection, keeping it in print for successive generations of readers. As of 2004, Kirk stayed dead, but, of course, that does not guarantee that fans have heard the last of the Manhunter name—far from it.

Barely a year after the *Detective Comics* series, Kirby dreamed up a new Manhunter, public defender Mark Shaw (appearing in 1975's *First Issue Special* #5), who was recruited into a secret society of super-lawmen. Kirby's reinvention clearly owed a lot to the Phantom in its vision of a race of law enforcers stretching back through the centuries, but it was to be this Manhunter's only appearance—for a few years, at least. The Manhunter cult was revived in a late 1970s issue of *Justice league,* and the 1980s saw a flurry of Manhunters, initially starring in the complex *Millennium* comic, in which android Manhunters attacked just about every DC character in print. This led to a continuing Manhunter comic for the first time in the character's history, which followed up *Millennium* in an equally bewildering way. Clearly believing that you could never have too many Manhunters, DC brought out yet another version in 1994, but this incarnation was Chase Lawlor, a musician who appeared to have been possessed by a supernatural creature called the Huntsman. Its edgy approach included the hero selling his soul to the devil (cue the sound of the fine, upstanding Paul Kirk turning in his grave) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the strip failed to find an audience.

Meanwhile, only a few years after the original Kirk was in that grave, writers began picking up on the Goodwin/Simonson series' device of antagonistic clones (made by the same shadowy organization that revived Kirk). First, a renegade clone led the short-lived mid-1970s *Secret Society of Super-Villains* in their comic, and much later a less-dastardly Kirk duplicate, named Kirk DePaul, created by Kurt Busiek and Tom Grummett, joined their commercial superteam, *The Power Company,* in the early 2000s.

The current Manhunter is a woman, Kate Spencer, who is a prosecuting attorney and the granddaughter of the Golden Age superheroine Phantom Lady. Created by writer Mark Andreyko and artist Jesus Saiz, she debuted in *Manhunter* Vol. 3 #1 (October 2004) and has since appeared in *Batman: Streets of Gotham* and *Birds of Prey.* —*DAR & PS*

Martian Manhunter

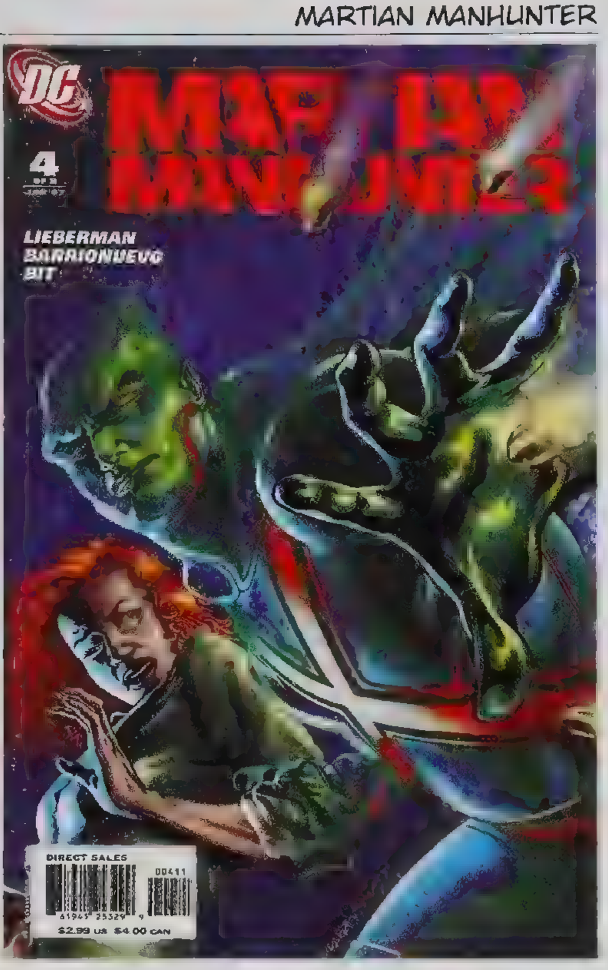
Although the debut of DC Comics' second Flash (*Showcase* #4, 1956) is universally regarded as the start of the Silver Age of comics (1956–1969), J'onn J'onzz, the Martian Manhunter—a second-string superhero—predates the Flash by nearly a year. Created by writer Joe Samachson (scripter of many Seven Soldiers of Victory and Sandman tales for DC) and artist Joe Certa (who had drawn DC's Robotman and Fawcett's Captain Marvel Jr.) as a backup feature for Batman and Robin (*Detective Comics* #225, 1955), the Manhunter is accidentally teleported to Earth from his native Mars by Professor Mark Erdel, whose "robot brain" has locked onto him from across the unknown depths of time and space. Terrified by the sudden appearance of J'onn J'onzz—a thick-browed, nearly seven-foot, 300-pound green humanoid—the professor immediately keels over dead, leaving the Martian stranded on Earth.

Altering his appearance with his natural shape-changing abilities, the Martian assumes human form, anglicizes his name to "John Jones," and takes on a day job as a terrestrial police detective, using his innate telepathic powers to trick his human colleagues into believing that they already know him. In his spare time, J'onzz uses his other talents, including invisibility, flight (derived from telekinesis), superstrength, superspeed, and "Martian vision" (similar to Superman's heat-vision) in a relentless war against both street criminals and costumed villains. His major weakness is fire; just as kryptonite is Superman's Achilles' heel, the Manhunter is powerless in the presence of open flames.

During his first few years on Earth, J'onzz uses his invisibility power to conceal his superheroics, and relies mainly on his detective skills to solve crimes (his feature *was* in *Detective Comics,* after all). This changed in 1959 (*Detective Comics* #273), when he lost his ability to use his other powers while invisible. His existence subsequently becomes common knowledge, and he becomes widely known as the Martian Manhunter. This leads to his eventual decision to ditch not only his "John Jones" identity (at first in favor of whatever human form the crisis *du jour* requires him to take) but to stop adopting human guises altogether in favor of full-time superheroics in his alien form. His demeanor is distant and logical, a classic "outsider" personality that anticipates *Star Trek*'s Mr. Spock by more than a decade.

With J'onzz's identity changes still underway during his *Detective* run, J'onzz found himself in the hands of writer Gardner Fox and artist Mike Sekowsky, serving double duty as a charter member of the Justice League of America (*The Brave and the Bold* #28–#30, 1960; *Justice League of America* #1, 1960), DC editor Julius Schwartz's wildly successful revival of the defunct 1940s superteam the Justice Society (also written by Fox, this feature had ended in *All-Star Comics* #57, 1951). It is only in this capacity—as a supporting character in an ensemble title—that the Martian Manhunter finally began appearing on comic book covers. While J'onzz remained a major player in the JLA, his *Detective Comics* run ended in 1964 with issue #326, with the Elongated Man (a future JLA member) taking his place; two months later, the Manhunter's feature resurfaced in the pages of *The House of Mystery* (beginning in issue #143), a title that had previously run only anthology-style horror, science fiction, and fantasy tales. Now helming his own feature and commanding a spot on each issue's cover, J'onzz had definitely moved up in his adopted world. Unfortunately, the character proved not to be quite the draw DC had hoped, and he lost his cover slot to a new lead feature, *Dial 'H' for Hero* (*House of Mystery* #156, 1966). The following year, J'onzz found himself bereft of even back-page status (as of *House of Mystery* #174) and had only the Justice League's headquarters to call home.

Thanks to the flybys of Mars performed by the Mariner spacecraft in the 1960s, planetologists—as well as the comics readership—became aware that the real Mars was incompatible with sentient life, such as the Martian Manhunter. DC therefore had to engage in some judicious "retconning" (retroactive continuity) to better explain J'onzz's origins. When the Manhunter finally returns to his homeworld (*Justice League of America* #71, 1969), he makes the horrific discovery that something has purged the Red Planet of all life. He also learns that his people had fled whatever menace had killed the Martian biosphere, and leaves the JLA—and the four-color page—to find them. His quest is ultimately successful, and he eventually returns to Earth and his fellow heroes (*Justice League of America* #100, 1972).



Martian Manhunter #4 © 2007 DC Comics. (Cover art by Al Barrionuevo.)

During the 1980s and 1990s, J'onn J'onzz continued to be a stalwart member of the JLA and Justice League International, becoming almost a father figure for some of the younger and brasher members of the team, such as the Blue Beetle, Booster Gold, Fire, and Ice. In fact, he has been integral to every incarnation of the Justice League from the very beginning. Under such writers as Keith Giffen, J. M. DeMatteis, Dan Jurgens, Gerard Jones, and Mark Waid, J'onzz loosens up a little emotionally, developing a dry sense of humor, though he is still often played as a silent, stolid straight man for banter-prone characters such as the Blue Beetle. During the 1990s, the Manhunter becomes the Justice League's chairman; his leadership skills are praised by no less a personage than Batman himself (JLA #2, 1997), who says J'onzz has "the best grasp of group dynamics of anyone I've ever met."

As has happened with many superheroes, the Martian Manhunter's origin story has been embroidered greatly during the last two decades, making him increasingly complex and more relevant to modern audiences. In 1988, J'onzz starred in a four-issue *Martian Manhunter* miniseries, in which writer DeMatteis and artist Mark Badger plagued the Manhunter with a vision of H'ronmeer, the Martian god of death, fire, and lies. This culminated in several shocking discoveries, including the fact that Dr. Erdel still lives. Erdel reveals that the Manhunter, grief-stricken over the deaths of his wife, daughter, and entire species from a plague, had lashed out in pain and destroyed Erdel's teleportation apparatus, thereby stranding himself on Earth. The Manhunter's vulnerability to fire turns out to be purely psychosomatic, a post-traumatic manifestation of J'onzz's repressed memories of his dead world's funeral pyres. To heal J'onzz's shattered psyche, Erdel had implanted happy memories of Mars based on old pulp science fiction stories—the Manhunter's Martian appearance is one such piece of implanted information. Erdel then faked his own death to leave J'onzz free to adapt to his new life on Earth. Using Erdel's rebuilt equipment, the Manhunter returns briefly to Mars, where he bids farewell to everything he has lost. When he returns shortly thereafter to Earth, he regards it as his home, more now than ever before.

Working with artists Tom Mandrake, Eduardo Barreto, and Jan Duursema, writer John Ostrander helmed an open-ended *Martian Manhunter* series that ran for thirty-six issues (1998–2001). Noting J'onzz's conspicuous lack of a "rogues' gallery," so typical of other superheroes, Ostrander embellished the character's backstory further by introducing his evil brother Ma'alefa'ak J'onzz (who is better known by his supervillain moniker, "Malefic"), the architect of the plague that destroyed the Martian people. Ostrander also intertwined the history of Mars and the J'onzz family with Jack Kirby's New Gods characters, revealing that the Martian Manhunter has long been an enemy of the diabolical and supremely powerful quasi-deity known as Darkseid. In *Martian Manhunter 1,000,000* (1998), Ostrander and Mandrake served up a possible future in which the Martian Manhunter is alive and performing heroic deeds on Mars in the year 85,271 C.E.

J'onn J'onzz was killed off in *Final Crisis* #1 (July 2008), but was soon resurrected in *Blackest Night* (2009–2010). The Martian Manhunter joined Stormwatch, a superhero team originally published by WildStorm, in their new DC series starting in September 2011.

Phil Morris played the Martian Manhunter in the live action television series *Smallville*. The Martian Manhunter has appeared many times in animation: as a regular in the television series *Justice League* and *Justice League Unlimited;* as a guest star in several episodes of *Batman: The Brave and the Bold;* and in the direct-to video animated films *Justice League: The New Frontier* (2008), in which he was voiced by Miguel Ferrer, and *Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths* (2010).

"[J'onn J'onzz is] the alien on Earth who still remains alien," Ostrander has said of the taciturn extraterrestrial hero. "And thus he's the most classic in terms of a detective as well—if he remains the classic outsider, unlike Superman, who was raised to almost think of himself as human. J'onn always has known that he's the alien and yet, at the same time, he feels very close [to] and very identified with the people of Earth." Today he remains a key player in the DC universe, a long-lived character whose alien-ness remains both intact and intriguing. —*MAM*

Marvel Boy

For a company founded on a title called *Marvel Comics*, the temptation to create a hero called Marvel Boy was always going to be hard to resist, and there have been many incarnations of that name over the years. The first Marvel Boy was Martin Burns, who enjoyed two different origins in just two appearances. In the first, by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby (in *Daring Mystery* #6, 1940), he becomes the reincarnation of Hercules, who had been driven to return to Earth by the growing Nazi threat. In his second origin, by Bob Oksner (in

USA Comics #7, 1941) he inadvertently knocks over a mummy—"Hercules' mummy," as per the myth-mash that characterized all of the Marvel Boy's stories—during a museum trip, and some of the mummy extract (whatever that might be) enters a cut in his skin; presto, instant superhero! In both cases, young Martin is presented with a (different) costume by an animated shadow that just happens to be lurking nearby. (Marvel has since established that there were two different 1940s Marvel Boys, both named Martin Burns.)

Fast-forward a decade, and following the collapse of the superhero genre, up popped a new Marvel Boy, created by writer/editor Stan Lee and artist Russ Heath in *Marvel* Boy #1 (December 1950): Bob Grayson, son of intrepid genius scientist Professor Matthew Grayson. Frightened by growing instability in Europe, the professor had fashioned a nuclear-powered spaceship and spirited his young son away to safety on Uranus. Now in futuristic 1950, the grown-up Grayson returned to Earth in a Roman-style, bare-legged costume, popping uranium pills and dazzling hoods with his "light jewel," which fired a beam of light that was temporarily blinding. The Marvel Boy stories were enjoyably scatterbrained, as he flitted from Uranus to Earth and back, tangling with aliens, commies, and swamis. After two issues, his *Marvel Boy* comic was retitled *Astonishing*, and beautifully drawn Marvel Boy stories (by Russ Heath and Bill Everett) continued to appear until issue #6, after which it was converted to a horror comic.

In a move to retain copyright on the name, Marvel Boy strips were reprinted in the 1960s and 1970s, and the hero himself was revived by writer Roy Thomas in a *Fantastic Four* issue (#164 in 1975). Grayson had apparently been in suspended animation and woke up with crime on his mind, renaming himself Crusader. He was defeated by the Fantastic Four and promptly died. His armbands (tiny generators filled with the energy of miniature stars) were passed on to Stark Industries, where a young would-be S.H.I.E.L.D. spy called Wendell Vaughn tried them on, fought off some enemy agents, and duly became Marvel Man (in *Captain America* #217). Adding blue tights to the original costume, Marvel Man next met the Hulk, changed his name to Quasar, and flew off to Uranus where, after three years of sleep, he was told he was the universe's new protector. Flying back to Earth, he would go on to enjoy a healthy run in his own comic for six years (1988–1994), as a sort of lighthearted Green Lantern.

But if Marvel Man became Quasar, that name was now going spare again, and so … enter Vance Astrovik, a.k.a. Marvel Boy, in the pages of the *New Warriors* in 1990. (This character was an alternative version of Guardians of the Galaxy leader Vance Astro.) Rejected by the Avengers, the telekinetic Marvel Boy was recruited by Night Thrasher to join his fellow novice heroes in the New Warriors, which proved to be one of the surprise hits of the 1990s. In an unusual move that very much mirrored the increasingly violent state of life in the late twentieth century, storylines revealed that Marvel Boy was an abused child, and in issue #20 he killed his father after a particularly savage beating. As a result, he was sent to jail where he changed his name to Justice and fought for the cause of prisoners' rights. In due course, Justice was released, and together with new Warriors girlfriend, Firestar, went on to get accepted into the Avengers. All of this meant that there was another vacancy in the Marvel Boy department.

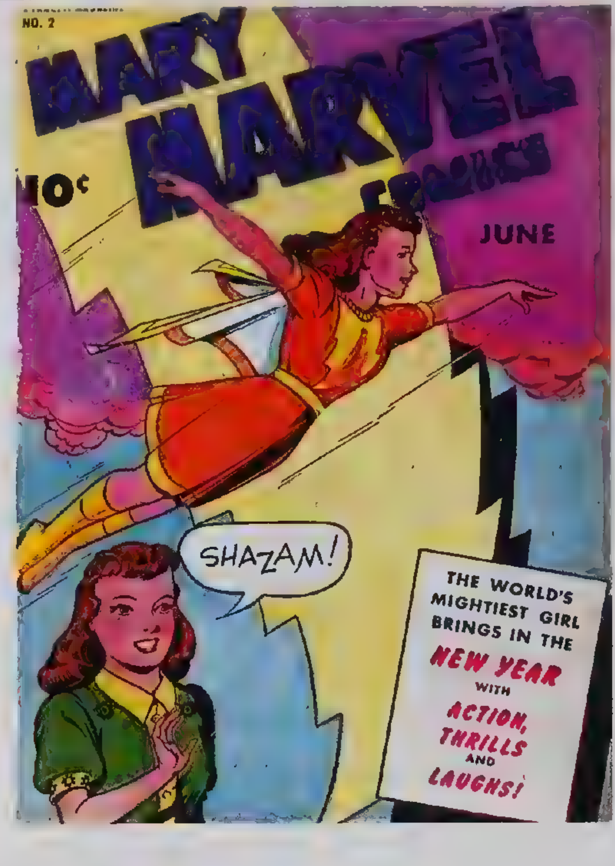
The fifth Marvel Boy duly arrived in 2000, courtesy of cutting-edge writer Grant Morrison, with the talented J. G. Jones on art, as part of the company's more mature Marvel Knights line. This time around, Marvel Boy was Noh-Varr, the sole survivor of a crashed spaceship of the Kree race, and the series' premise was effectively a retelling of the early (1968) Captain Marvel series, right down to the design of Marvel Boy's costume. Over six issues, Noh-Varr (effectively a living weapon) came up against Mr. Midas (a billionaire dressed in Iron Man's old armor, for some reason), S.H.I.E.L.D., Nexus the Living Corporation, a beautiful killer called Oubliette, and pretty much the whole planet. Noh-Varr has since joined the Dark Avengers, adopted the name Captain Marvel, and joined the main Avengers team. Noh-Varr is undoubtedly the least sympathetic Marvel Boy so far, albeit the best crafted, but almost inevitably there will be more.

In 2006 it was revealed that the third Marvel Boy, Robert Grayson, was not dead after all, and that the Crusader had been a deluded Eternal from Uranus. Grayson had remained on Uranus, where he lived among the native, non-humanoid Uranians, who altered his body to suit their environment. Now known as the Uranian, Grayson is a member of the Agents of Atlas, a contemporary team of heroes from the 1950s (when Marvel was known as Atlas), including Jimmy Woo, Gorilla-Man, M 11 (the Human Robot), Namora, and Venus. —*DAR & PS*

Mary Marvel

Perhaps fearing that success inevitably inspires imitation, Fawcett Comics seemed to have stolen a march on its competitors by copying its all-conquering Captain Marvel itself. First, they created Captain Marvel Jr., and then in one genre-spanning month in late 1942, they hit both the funny animal market with Marvel Bunny, and the largely untapped female market with Mary Marvel. Writer Otto Binder and artist Marc Swayze introduced Mary in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18, in a tale that reveals that Captain Marvel's young alter ego, Billy Batson, has a long-lost twin sister, Mary (Batson) Bromfield, separated from him at birth and brought up by a wealthy foster family. As luck would have it, Mary is then promptly kidnapped, giving Captain Marvel—senior and junior—ample opportunity to show off their powers by soundly thrashing the kidnappers. Somehow, the miscreants escape, defeat the superheroes, and turn on Mary who, upon uttering a plaintive cry of "SHAZAM!" is magically transformed into the red-mini-skirted Mary Marvel. Like her brother, the superpowered Mary can fly and is possessed of almost unlimited strength, and so she makes short work of dispatching her captors.

Fawcett was never overly concerned with explanations for its heroes' powers, and readers had to be satisfied with the ubiquitous, long-bearded wizard Shazam popping up to say that this was simply what was meant to happen. In any case, logical or not, the three heroes pledge to fight crime together, and the following month Mary graduated into her own feature in *Wow Comics* #9, displacing the bizarrely named Mr. Scarlet and Pinky from the cover spot. Swayze was deemed too important to draw a new feature such as Mary's and was returned to the Captain Marvel feature, leaving the new strip to be drawn by Jack Binder, brother of the strip's principal writer Otto; this made them one of the few brother teams in comics history.


NO. 2
MARY MARVEL COMICS
10¢
JUNE
SHAZAM!
THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST GIRL BRINGS IN THE NEW YEAR WITH ACTION, THRILLS AND LAUGHS!

Mary Marvel #2 © 1946 Fawcett. (Cover art by Jack Binder.)

Unlike Billy Batson, who was transformed into a muscular adult, his sister Mary was still only a young girl after uttering the magic words, possibly in an attempt to appeal to a young readership. Indeed, for Mary, Otto Binder deliberately downplayed the heroics typical of the other Fawcett comics, preferring instead more human-interest stories. (In fact, unlike her contemporary, Wonder Woman, Mary was very much unliberated, content to be helping out her male family members.) However, Mary did have her share of villains, including Georgia Sivana (from the ever-increasing Sivana family of mad scientists), Mr. Night, and Nightowl; but she was just as likely to spend her time frolicking with gnomes or rescuing lost puppies. In addition to her wealthy foster parents, the supporting cast included hayseed best pal, Freckles, who occasionally donned a costume to become (wait for it) Freckles Marvel, and whose main purpose was to be rescued. Another costumed cohort was Uncle Marvel, a con man who persuaded Mary to sell her heroic services for cash, but soon reformed to become a general nuisance in many later strips of all the Fawcett characters. Mary regularly teamed up with Captain Marvel and their friend Freddy Freeman, who became Captain Marvel Jr., as the "Marvel Family" of superheroes.

Sales were strong enough during World War II to warrant Mary's own title, and *Mary Marvel* #1 appeared in 1945, while a line of Mary Marvel dresses sold in the thousands. The next year saw the launch of the Mary Marvel fan club, but sales soon started to slump (possibly as the result of a maturing audience switching over to romance titles), and in 1947 *Wow* became a Western comic. Barely one month later, Mary's own title was transformed into *Monte Hale Western* and she had to make do with a berth in *Marvel Family,* until the 1950s superhero slump killed that off in 1954.

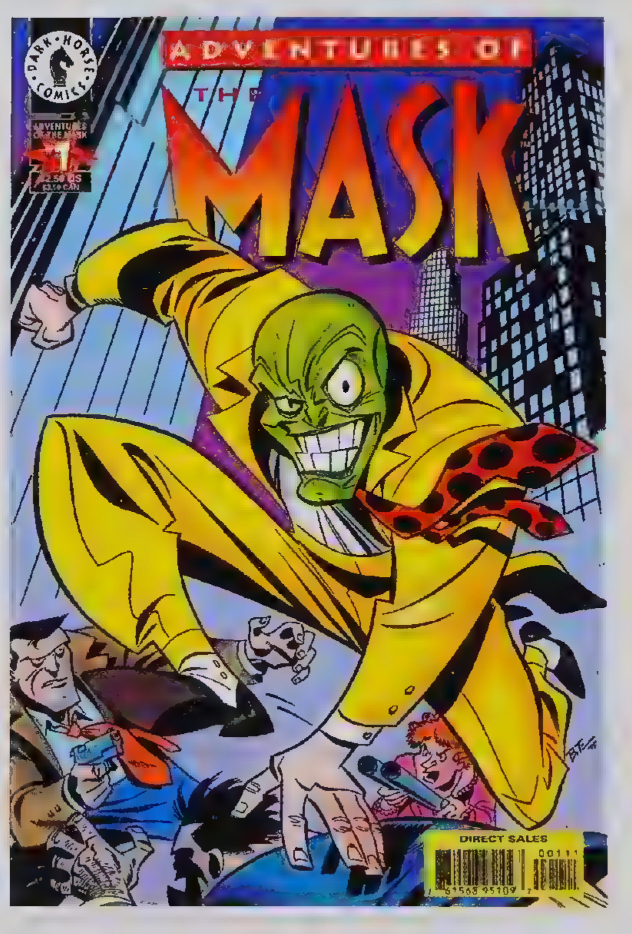
By the time of her initial demise, Mary had become a teenager, and when she was revived by DC Comics—some thirty years later—she was still a teenager. As part of the *Shazam!* title, Mary starred in occasional *Marvel Family* adventures, as well as a few solo backups. In these tales, usually featuring Mary surrounded by a gang of teenage girlfriends, she was portrayed as a would-be Nancy Drew, solving quirky mysteries—and with beautiful art by Bob Oksner she never looked better. Captain Marvel went on to become a regular fixture in the DC lineup, but for much of the 1980s and 1990s Mary languished in obscurity. For a readership lacking in young girls it would seem that there is now no audience for the innocence and simplicity of Mary Marvel.

Indeed, in the series *Countdown to Final Crisis* (2007–2008) and *Final Crisis* (2008–2009), Mary is corrupted and falls under the mental control of the evil New God Desaad. She turns evil and even attacks Wonder Woman. Freddy Freeman, who has become the new Captain Marvel, uses magic to transform her back to her non-superpowered form. No longer mentally possessed by Desaad, Mary is horrified by what she had become. But when she later reverts back to her evil, superpowered form, Shazam removes her superpowers.

Mary Marvel also appears in the 2007 limited series *Shazam!: The Monster Society of Evil,* which presents an alternate, child-friendly version of the Captain Marvel mythos. Mary Marvel first appeared in animation in the *Shazam!* television series. She appeared as Mary Batson in a 2010 episode of *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* and returned as the superpowered Mary Marvel, and part of the Marvel Family, in the 2011 episode "The Malicious Mr. Mind!" *—DAR & PS*

The Mask

Superheroes have always offered vicarious empowerment to the average, the meek, and the disenfranchised. When orphan whelp Billy Batson



Adventures of The Mask #1 ™ & © 1996 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. (Cover art by Bruce Timm.)

Comedian Jim Carrey took on the title role of 1994's *The Mask*. (New Line/Dark Horse / The Kobal Collection.)

transforms into the mighty Captain Marvel by shouting "Shazam," for example, one thinks, *If only I had such a gift.*

Stanley Ipkiss might disagree with you. This human doormat is the lowest of losers—until he buys an ancient mask in a curio shop. Donning the eerie visor, he is transmogrified into a mischievous oddball with a green cranium and a devilish, toothy sneer—plus malleability, invulnerability, and the power to pull objects (especially weapons) out of thin air. Meet the Mask, or "Big-Head," as he is known in public, who embarks upon a mission of revenge against his tormentors. Premiering in *Dark Horse Presents* #10 (1987), the Mask is a vengeful, human Bugs Bunny with an "R" rating—unlike that "wascally wabbit," however, when the Mask blows up someone, he or she stays dead. As the body count increases in Big-Head's wake, resolute cop Lt. Kellaway is determined to stop this crazy killer, and the heat is on hapless Ipkiss.

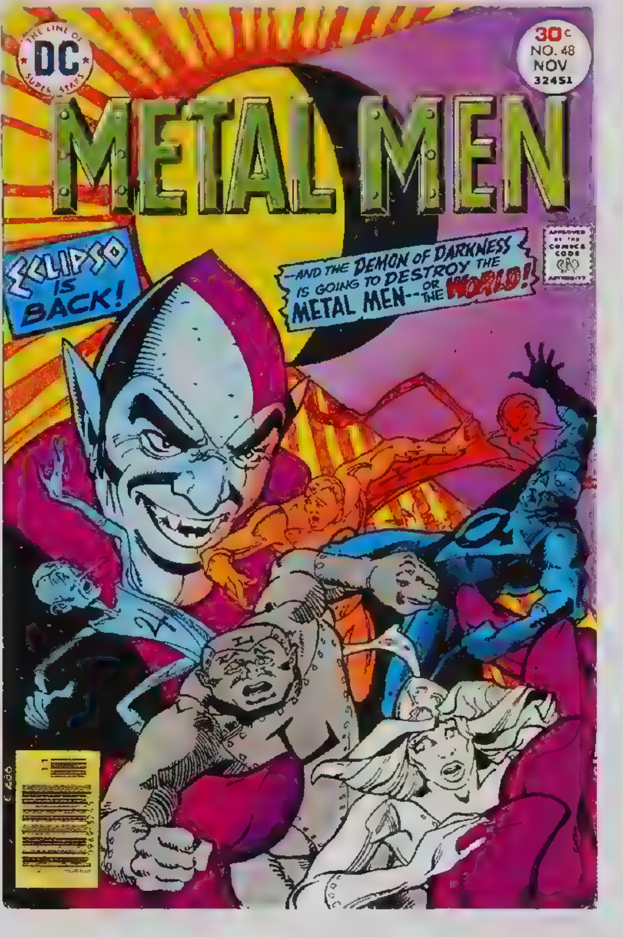
The Mask was envisioned by Dark Horse Comics president Mike Richardson, writer Randy Stradley, and artist Chris Warner, but given life by writer John Arcudi and illustrator Doug Mahnke. Dark Horse published multiple storylines featuring the mask (the object) falling into the hands of (make that onto the faces of) a variety of people, with the moral to the story (if there was one) being, vengeance carries a price. Each person who has worn the mask has been intoxicated by its power, but eventually beset by disaster. From his *Dark Horse Presents* appearances the Mask clobbered his way into a four-issue miniseries titled *Mayhem* (1989), then into a succession of miniseries and specials all his own, including *The Mask* (1991), *The Mask Returns* (1992), *The Mask Strikes Back* (1995), and *The Mask: Toys in the Attic* (1998).

A nonlethal, kid-friendly version of the character became a movie icon in *The Mask* (1994), a box-office smash starring rubber-faced comedian Jim Carrey as Ipkiss/Mask, and featuring a scene-stealing dog named Milo. *The Mask* is also noted for its breakout performance by Cameron Diaz as a femme fatale turned Ipkiss' love interest. A hefty special-effects budget brought to life the Mask's implausible *Looney Tunes*–inspired antics, and Carrey (in the role) coined a short-lived catchphrase: "Ssssmokin'!" A spate of merchandising accompanied the film, and *Son of the Mask* made it to movie houses in 2004. *The Mask,* promoted as "From Zero to Hero," spawned a television cartoon spinoff (1995–1996) in both syndication and on Saturday mornings, which in turn inspired a Dark Horse comic book in the "animated" style, *Adventures of the Mask* (1995–1996). Other animation-based and traditional *Mask* comics followed for a few years, including a four-issue Dark Horse/DC crossover teaming Big-Head with Batman's arch foe in *Joker/Mask* (2000). *—ME*

Metal Men

Born out of necessity and desperation, the Metal Men were one of the more inventive concepts of the 1960s. The strip was created over the course of one weekend in 1962 by writer/editor Robert Kanigher and artist Ross Andru, to fill the pages of *Showcase* #37, when a previously scheduled feature suddenly fell through. Kanigher dreamed up a group of robots, each made out of a different metal and each having powers and personality reflecting its particular metal. The origin story recounts how brilliant, pipe-smoking government scientist, Dr. Will Magnus, creates six robots in his giant, secret laboratory and fits each with a Responsometer, which gives them human characteristics. During their creation, the robots are affected by a powerful Aurora Borealis event, which somehow gives them the personalities and emotions of real people.

The robots' abilities were as distinct as their "personalities." For example, Gold, the leader, could stretch for miles and was brave and serious. Mercury could melt at room temperature and was a real hot-head. Platinum (or Tina as she called herself) was tough and resilient, and could weave herself into all sorts of constructions; she was also in love with Doc Magnus. Lead acted as a barrier and was large and slightly slow-witted, while Iron was incredibly strong, if slightly dull, and Tin was a rather weak, timid, stuttering character, who tried his best, but lacked the powers of his teammates.


DC
30¢
NO. 48
NOV
METAL MEN
ECLIPSO IS BACK!
—AND THE DEMON OF DARKNESS IS GOING TO DESTROY THE METAL MEN—OR THE WORLD!

Metal Men #48 © 1976 DC Comics. (Cover art by Walt Simonson.)

Kanigher was an endlessly creative writer, often basing his stories on gimmicks or plot twists; with the science-based Metal Men his writing occasionally resembled a chemistry lesson. The team members were in some ways the ultimate establishment heroes, funded by the Pentagon and operating out of an army compound at the government's behest, but for all that, what made the strip so enjoyable were the robots' clashing personalities, particularly the cantankerous Mercury. Readers also immediately responded to the timid but plucky Tin who, like them, had no real powers, but the focus of the strip was more often on the doomed love of Plat inum for her all-too-human creator.

Right from the beginning, the Metal Men's foes were often robots themselves, be they giant robots, wooden robots, dinosaur robots, or even robot termites. The group also had a cadre of chemical opponents, including the Gas Gang and the giant, walking chemical vat, Chemo. Uniquely, the Metal Men often died in their stories, only to be resurrected by Doc Magnus in the next issue; but after a while their Lazarus-like rebirths began to wear thin. In 1963, after four issues of *Showcase*, the Metal Men were given their own title, which was also produced by the Kanigher/Andru team, but when artist Andru left to take over the Flash, the comic's direction began to change. Andru's replacement, Mike Sekowsky, soon became editor and writer, too, and introduced a darker element, with a storyline involving the characters becoming hunted outcasts, while Doc Magnus went into a coma.

With issue #37, the Metal Men effectively dispensed with their "superhero" identities altogether, much as the Teen Titans and Wonder Woman had. They met up with wealthy financier Mister Conan and assumed human identities. Donning synthetic skin, Gold became jet-set swinger Guy Gideon; Tina was Tina Platt, a model; and Lead and Tin became Ledby Hand and Tinker—a sort of Simon and Garfunkel singer/songwriter duo. Iron assumed the form of builder Jon "Iron" Mann, while Mercury became the red-haired artist Mercurio, whose wild appearance and savage temper apparently echoed Mike Sekowsky's. Sadly, the new direction, which touched upon the supernatural and involved an insane Doc Magnus bent on world domination, was to prove stillborn as the comic was soon canceled (with issue #41 in 1970).

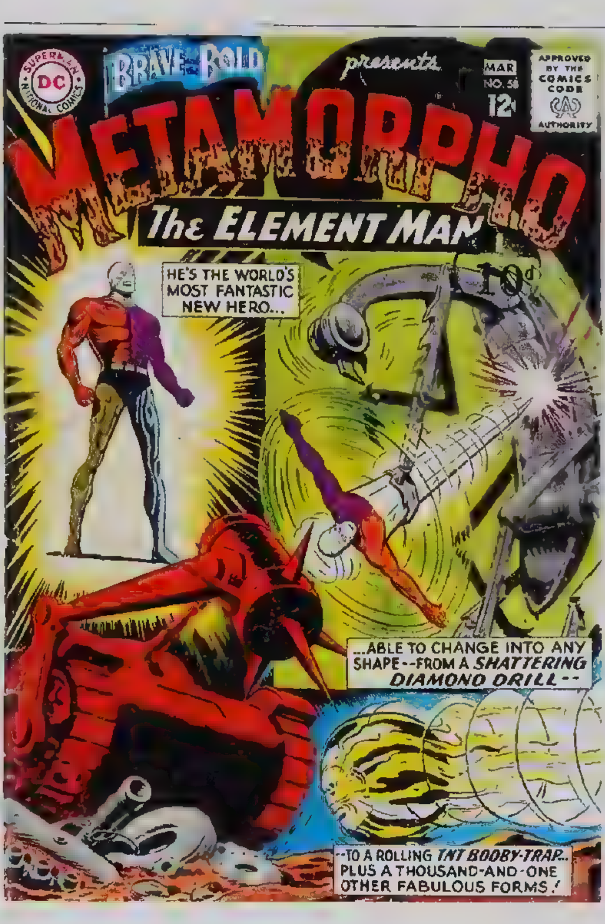
After a lengthy fallow period, several guest slots with Batman in *The Brave and the Bold* and three reprint issues in 1973 resulted in a second chance for the team when their series was revived (with issue #45 in 1976). The human identities had gone, Doc Magnus was cured of his megalomaniacal tendencies, Chemo was rampaging again, and all was right with the world. Over the following twelve issues, the Metal Men battled Eclipso, the Plutonium Man, and Dr. Strangeglove. They squabbled, fell in love, and died a couple of times. Even so, the public failed to warm to then, and they faded from view, with the exception of a 1993 miniseries, which gave the Metal Men a new origin and turned Doc Magnus into a robot. The *Infinite Crisis* series (2005–2006) restored the metal Men's original origins and established that Magnus was never a robot.

The Metal Men received a new limited series in 2007, and star in the backup feature of the new *Doom Patrol* comic book that launched in 2009. They debuted in animation in "Clash of the Metal Men!," a 2010 episode of the television series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. —*DAR & PS*

Metamorpho

Throughout the 1960s, DC Comics used its *Showcase* and *The Brave and the Bold* titles to introduce new characters, and as the decade progressed these heroes became stranger and stranger. Metamorpho the Element Man first appeared in *The Brave and the Bold* #57, in 1965, from editor Murray Boltinoff and writer Bob Haney, with art by DC's sole female artist at that time, Ramona Fradon. Metamorpho was originally dashing, reckless soldier of fortune (and occasional Grand Prix racer) Rex Mason, who was besotted with wealthy, blond heiress Sapphire Stagg. Sadly, Stagg's father, Simon Stagg, disapproved of their romance and sent Mason on a deadly quest to an Egyptian pyramid to bring back the famed Orb of Ra. This being a comic book, the Orb somehow rearranged Mason's chemical makeup so that he could control the elements in his body, and he found that he could do the most extraordinary things. He now had the strength of marble and a knockout punch with the power of cobalt. He could transform himself into a slide made of calcium, change into gas or fire, and assume just about any size or shape you could imagine.

The downside to all this was that Mason was now incredibly ugly, his whole body being a mass of hideously pasty and textured skin, in a variety of orange and purple hues. As a result of this, Mason more or less moved in with the Staggs, as the disgruntled Simon Stagg vainly tried to reverse the Orb's effects. Curiously for comics, the smitten Sapphire was still as much in love with Mason as ever. Unfortunately, another resident of the Stagg mansion, the brutish bodyguard Java (in fact a caveman somehow revived by Stagg *père* on one of his many expeditions), was also in love with Sapphire, resulting in all manner of plots to dispose of the afflicted Mason.


SUPERMAN NATIONAL COMICS
DC
THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD
presents
MAR NO. 58
12¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
METAMORPHO
The ELEMENT MAN
HE'S THE WORLD'S MOST FANTASTIC NEW HERO...
10¢
...ABLE TO CHANGE INTO ANY SHAPE--FROM A SHATTERING DIAMOND DRILL--
--TO A ROLLING TNT BOOBY-TRAP.. PLUS A THOUSAND-AND-ONE OTHER FABULOUS FORMS!

The Brave and the Bold #58 © 1965 DC Comics. (Cover art by Ramona Fradon.)

Following two successful issues of *The Brave and the Bold,* Mason—now calling himself Metamorpho—graduated to his own comic, which went on for seventeen issues. A typical Metamorpho story involved Mason, the Staggs, and Java traveling around the world, from one luxury villa to another, and somehow blundering into an inevitable tangle with bizarre wrongdoers. Among this motley band of villains were the likes of Stingaree, the Balkan Brothers, Dr. Destiny, Achille le Heel, and Mason's female counterpart, Urania, the Element Girl. As their names suggest, this was a superhero strip with its tongue firmly lodged in its cheek, and despite his macabre appearance, Metamorpho was usually one of DC's more lighthearted heroes. In fact, with its settings on the French Riviera, in Africa, and in America's high society, the strip was reminiscent of that staple of swinging 1960s cinema, the caper movie.

Much of the feature's appeal derived not just from Haney's entertaining writing but from Fradon's charmingly inventive artwork, and when she left comics to raise a family, the comic suffered a slow decline, finally going under in 1968. Metamorpho's savior was to be editor Murray Boltinoff, who had a tendency to stick the character into whichever comic he happened to be working on at the time. This meant that Metamorpho guest starred in numerous adventures with Batman and Superman, as well as enjoying short runs as a backup feature in *Action Comics* and *World's Finest.* In the 1980s, he became something of a superteam specialist, joining first the Outsiders and then the Justice League. In one mid-1980s issue of *The Outsiders,* Metamorpho and Sapphire finally married, a satisfying resolution to one of DC's more enduring (and endearing) courtships. In *Justice League Europe* he was stationed in France and was very much the star of the team, enjoying a series of suitably quirky adventures and fraught tussles with the locals. This exposure led to a short-lived series in the 1990s that, misguidedly, adopted a darker approach and failed to engage fans.

Author Neil Gaiman (*Sandman*) and artist Mike Allred (*Madman*) collaborated on an unusual Metamorpho serial in DC's *Wednesday Comics* (2009). Metamorpho has appeared in animation on the television series *Justice League* and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* —DAR

Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers

Six multicultural high school students, guided by their mentor, an interdimensional being named Zordon, guard the universe against evildoers and miscreants. Each of the teens—Jason Lee, Zack Taylor, Billy Cranston, Kimberly Hart, and Trini Kwan—is given access to "extraordinary powers drawn from the ancient creatures [known as] dinosaurs." When they are in danger, they point their Morphers to the sky and call out the names of their "dinosaurs": Mastodon! Pterodactyl! Triceratops! Sabertoothed Tiger! Tyrannosaurus! The teens then morph into "a

The masked cast of television's *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers.* (Buena Vista TV/Renaissance-Atlantic Films/ABC-TV / The Kobal Collection / Short, Geoffrey H.)

formidable fighting force known to one and all as the Power Rangers."

Armed with Power Coins, Power Crystals, Blade Blasters, colossal fighting machines called Zords (that connect to form one colossal Megazord), and the ancient secrets of martial arts, the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers (MMPR) followed the success of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles as the next karate-kicking defenders of the world. As Power Rangers, they are superstrong, superfast, and super-determined. Donning high-tech racecar driver–like bodysuits and plastic masks and helmets, they are primary-colored heroes well versed in combat skills. In fact, most fans identified the original five rangers by their colors: the Red Ranger (Jason), the Black Ranger (Zach), The Blue Ranger (Billy), the Pink Ranger (Kim), and the Yellow Ranger (Trini). Though the Rangers' names and colors have changed over the years—and their look has been updated to a high-tech style featuring space and astronomy themes—they are still a fun-loving group of teens sworn to save the earth from destruction.

The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers were introduced in Japan in 1975 as *Secret Task Force Goranger,* a children's television show produced by Toei Company Ltd., one of Japan's largest movie studios. Haim Saban, founder and former executive producer of Saban Entertainment, encountered a live-action "Dinosaur Task Force" series in 1992, while he was traveling in Japan, and decided to repackage the show for a U.S. audience as *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers.* (Toei still holds the rights to the Power Rangers in Asia and produces the Japanese version of the heroes.)

Since the Power Rangers premiered on the Fox network in 1993, they have "built one of the most passionate groundswells of devotion in the history of kids' entertainment," said *San Francisco Examiner* writer Peter Stack. The *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* show ran for three seasons, from 1993 to 1996, in which the Rangers battled the likes of Rita Repulsa, Goldar, Finster, Squatt and Babo, Scorpina, Lord Zedd, Ivan Ooze, Rito Revolto, and Mastervile.

Twentieth Century Fox released the Saban Entertainment–produced *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie* in 1995. In this live-action feature, the super-warriors face off against Ivan Ooze, a centuries-old evildoer out to destroy Zordon. Despite its $40 million worth of special effects, critics panned the film. Not surprisingly, kids loved it. Licensed children's books, action figures, masks, T-shirts, bed sheets, a comic-book series from Hamilton Comics, and other merchandise enjoyed healthy sales in the retail market—the action figures alone ranking within the top three boys' character toys on the U.S. market. Until the arrival of the Power Rangers, it was almost unheard of for Japanese character merchandise to dominate the American retail market; at its height, trade publications reported annual U.S. sales of Power Rangers merchandise of $100 million.

By 1996, the popularity of the Power Rangers had waned. But because toy sales were still strong and the television show was near the top of the ratings list, Saban executives decided to reinvest in the property in an effort to attract a younger generation of viewers. A massive licensing and merchandising program was kick-started, and the Power Rangers look was updated. Multiple changes were made to the TV show's title, which became *Power Rangers Zeo* (1996); *Power Rangers Turbo* (1997); *Power Rangers in Space* (1998); and *Power Rangers Lost Galaxy* (1999). By the end of the 1990s, the Rangers had a new lease on life, with the Nielson Galaxy Explorer hailing *Power Rangers* as the "most popular kids show of the 1990s."

The 2000s saw more name changes to the series, including *Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue* (2000); *Power Rangers Time Force* (2001); *Power Rangers Wild Force* (2002); *Power Rangers Ninja Storm* (2003); and *Power Rangers Dino Thunder* (2004). Despite this seeming confusion, and the concerned cries of parents who claimed the superteam promoted violence through its extensive portrayals of physical combat, the show has continued to increase in popularity during the new millennium. Recent series include *Power Rangers S.P.D.* (2005), *Power Rangers Mystic Force* (2006), *Power Rangers Operation Overdrive* (2007), *Power Rangers Jungle Fury* (2008), *Power Rangers RPM* (2009), and *Power Rangers Samurai* (2011). —*GM*

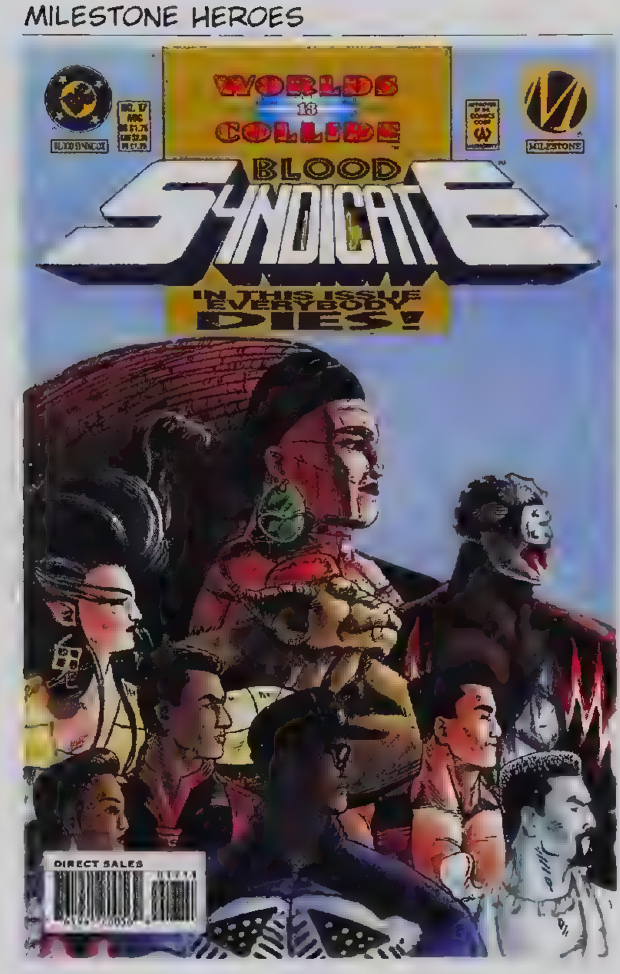
Milestone Heroes

It is common for comics companies to give themselves exalted names, but in the case of Milestone the point was particularly well taken. Debuting in 1993, it was the first comics company established by African Americans and devoted to superheroes of color. Seeking strength—and normalcy—in numbers, Milestone's founders (writer Dwayne McDuffie, artist Denys Cowan, business writer Derek Dingle and, briefly, Michael Davis, future head of Motown Animation) decided to launch an entire line of superheroes, rather than a single character, aiming to reflect the range of real life, and not just put one more token "minority" superbeing on the shelves.

This ambitious scope helped guarantee that none of Milestone's comics would seem to be a gimmick, even as the creators' perspective helped assure a certain uniqueness, presenting ideas and issues seldom seen in mainstream superhero comics (and hardly ever handled as credibly as Milestone did). Milestone had standards of quality, and a level of freshness and wit, that stood above much else that was produced during an early to mid-1990s glut of new (though not often original) superheroes.

The comics' setting itself is unusual for the New York -centric norm of superhero stories; Milestone's tales take place in the fictional Midwestern metropolis of Dakota. Many of Dakota's superbeings appear after a single catastrophic event, in which a major gang rumble ("The Big Bang") is broken up by the authorities, using a mysterious gas that kills many and mutates the survivors (and unwitting bystanders) into superheroes and villains. Milestone's comics were notable for uncommon touches of realism, and even this fantastic event was no exception.

The best known of these "Bang Babies" was Static (featured in a comic of the same name from 1993 to 1997), a teen who acquires electro-



Blood Syndicate #17 © 1994 DC Comics/Milestone Media. (Cover art by Crisscross.)

magnetic powers and has since starred in the popular Kids WB network cartoon *Static Shock,* which debuted in 2000 as the first television series with an African American superhero as its lead character. *Static*'s book was emblematic of Milestone's realism: a bullied school kid, Static's alter-ego Virgil Hawkins can't do much more about it after gaining his powers than he could before, for fear of revealing his superhero identity; his tendency to run off when duty calls costs him even the most menial of occupations (it seems that only white *Daily Planet* reporters get better job security). This outcast kid has to deal with his own homophobia when a friend comes out; and after Static recognizes a dealer in a drug bust as another close classmate's boyfriend, he lets him go. (Moral shadings were commonplace for "The Dakota universe," in this book and no less in *The Blood Syndicate* [1993–1996], about a team of super-thugs who form a kind of underground United Nations from the fragments of their former gang factions, with no one but each other to turn to.)

Not all Milestone's heroes were "Bang Babies," though. Hardware (starring in his own book from 1993 to 1997) was a high-tech armored warrior whose alter ego, Curtis Metcalf, rebels against the white corporate mentor who won't give the brilliant black inventor credit for his creations. The CEO turns out to be running a criminal enterprise as well as an unethical business, and over the course of the series Hardware finds a balance between his legitimate indignation and his self-sabotaging rage.

Icon (starring in his own book from 1993 to 1997) was the modern superhero name of an alien whose ship crashed in the American South in 1839; seeking to blend in, he takes on the appearance of the earthlings he sees, who happen to be African American slaves. Blessed (or cursed) with a superhuman lifespan, among other strange powers, the alien has assumed the identity of a wealthy conservative lawyer in Dakota by the 1990s, and is convinced to use his powers for justice by an idealistic teen who becomes his sidekick, Rocket. The book intriguingly examined the spectrum of black ideology (from the assimilated-in-more-ways-than-one Icon, to the rebellious Rocket, who becomes comics' first unwed teen mom superhero). There is also a poignant undercurrent of pride in Icon's selection of a black identity regardless of the consequences.

As Milestone enjoyed an initial flush of success, the line expanded in 1994, with *Shadow Cabinet* (a creepy secret society of superheroes that anticipates post–September 11 questions of civil rights versus national security), *Xombi* (a weird and irreverent series about a slain Asian-American scientist reanimated by his own experimental nano-machines), and *Kobalt* (a somewhat satiric white superhero series).

In its heyday, Milestone introduced some of comics' most successful and interesting new artists (including Humberto Ramos and John Paul Leon), counted famous fans from Clarence Thomas to Chuck D, and published over 200 comics in four years. The company ran several issues without Comics Code approval, pushing the envelope of edgy subject matter in a way that Milestone's establishment distribution partner, DC Comics, honored, by carrying every book (and probably growing in the process).

Sadly, a contracting comics market took Milestone with it, and the company's comic book production ceased by mid-1997. However, the broader Milestone Media operation soldiers on, and hasn't run out of victories: There has been the *Static Shock* cartoon (2000–present), a 2001 comic miniseries (again published by Milestone and distributed by DC) to tie in to in, and another interesting Static Shock story (dealing with prejudice against Arab Americans), in volume 2 of the industry-wide benefit compilation *9-11* (DC Comics, 2002). Milestone Media has put out children's books on African American history makers, and at least one scholarly treatise has been published on the company's comics (*Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans* by Jeffrey A. Brown).

In 2008, DC Comics announced that it was reviving the Milestone superheroes and integrating them into the DC universe. There was a *Milestone Forever* limited series in 2010, and in September 2011, DC launched a new *Static Shock* series, drawn by Scott McDaniel and co-written by McDaniel and John Rozum. *–AMC*

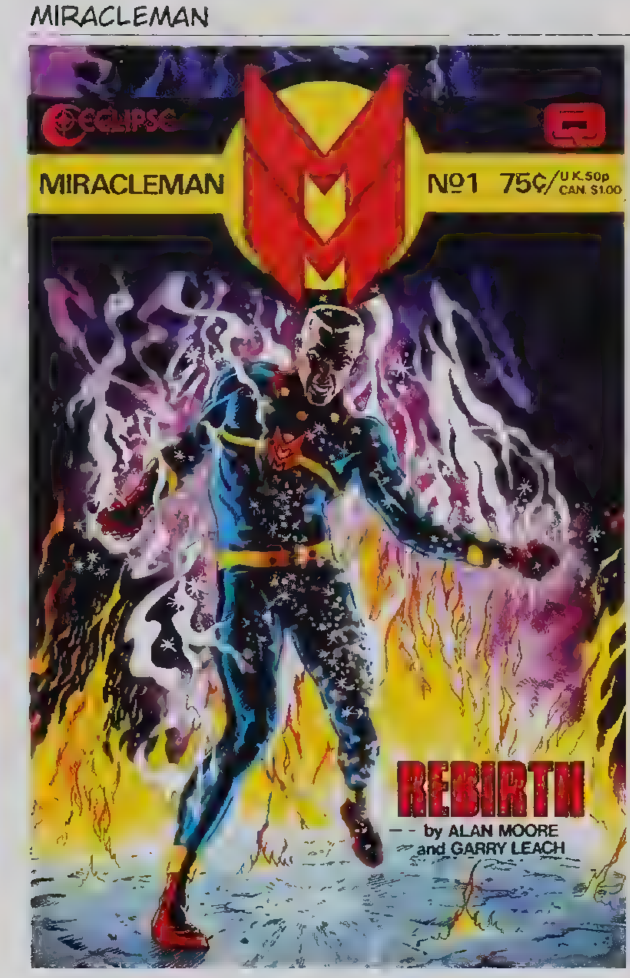
Miracleman

Newspaper reporter Mike Moran dreams of flying children and of exploding spaceships. When he is caught in a hostage situation in real life, Moran sees the backward reflection of the word "atomic," and it triggers something in his brain. Whispering the word "Kimota," Moran is transformed into Miracleman, a superstrong, nearly indestructible being. With the return of his long-forgotten alter ego, Moran begins to unravel the memories and secrets of his past, including the fate of Kid Miracleman and Young Miracleman, his sidekicks in the 1950s, who have similarly disappeared in the years since. But one of them is now a malicious tycoon, with no conscience or scruples, and he'll stop at nothing—even the destruction of London—to stay on top of the world. And even as Moran explores his past, and fathers a very *special* daughter, his real life is unraveling around him, and the scientist responsible for his creation has other plans.

In the post–World War II economy in England, the comics business was booming. Publisher Len Miller was doing well reprinting the adventures of American hero Captain Marvel, until 1954, when Fawcett Publications settled with DC Comics and agreed to stop publishing the adventures of the Shazam!-shouting hero. Suddenly left without a main character, Miller instructed comics writer/artist Mick Anglo to create a knock-off of *Captain Marvel*. Anglo and his studio created Marvelman, whose magic word was "Kimota!" He was accompanied on many of his adventures by Kid Marvelman and Young Marvelman, and often faced the evil genius Emil Gargunza, aliens, and strange thugs. Marvelman became the first true British superhero, and his popularity soared for nine years. But the business changed, and in 1963, the last *Marvelman* adventure was published.

In 1981, ex-Marvel U.K. editor Dez Skinn was striking out on his own to create a new anthology of creator-owned comics, and he planned to bring Marvelman back. Impressed by a proposal by new writer Alan Moore, Skinn commissioned the first new *Marvelman* story for *Warrior* #1 (March 1982). Moore's story, combined with detailed art by Garry Leach, blew readers' minds. Moore took the 1950s concept and brought it into the 1980s, posing the question, "What effect would a real superpowered character have on *our* world?" As *Marvelman* continued, Alan Davis took over as artist, and the strip became *Warrior*'s most popular feature. But creative and financial problems behind the scenes—as well as a threatening letter from Marvel Comics when Skinn published a *Marvelman Special* (1984)—led not only to the end of *Marvelman* in *Warrior*, but the eventual closing of the magazine itself. *Marvelman* had won British comics' Eagle Awards, and attracted attention in the United States, but it was now out of a home.

Skinn approached U.S. publishers about picking up the *Warrior* properties, but both DC and Marvel declined *Marvelman*. Pacific Comics eventually agreed to publish the series, but went bank-



Miracleman #1 © 1985 Eclipse Comics. (Cover art by Garry Leach.)

rupt before it could appear. Pacific's assets were bought by Eclipse Comics, and *Marvelman* finally had a publisher again. After a controversial name change to avoid litigation from Marvel Comics, the new *Miracleman* #1 debuted in August 1985. The series was an immediate critical and sales hit. Issues #1–#6 featured reprints of the *Warrior* material, but new material—drawn by artist Chuck Beckum (now known as Chuck Austen)—also began appearing in issue #6 (February 1986). As the publishing schedule began to fluctuate, artists Rick Veitch and John Totleben finished the stories for Moore's run on the series, concluding with *Miracleman* #16 (December 1989).

Moore's stories were universally praised, and are often cited as the inspiration for such later series as *Watchmen* (also by Moore), *Marvels*, and DC's *Kingdom Come*. Despite the acclaim, two *Miracleman* issues raised retailer concern in the United States. Issue #9 (July 1986) featured explicit scenes of childbirth, resulting in some retailers refusing to carry the book, or placing it in their adult section. The violence of *Miracleman* #15 (November 1988)—in which Kid Miracleman causes the destruction of half of London and the deaths of more than 10,000 people—was not nearly as boycotted, but comics historians do note it as one of the most violent mainstream comics published to that date. As he left the series, Moore gave his successor a storytelling challenge: Miracleman had now reshaped planet Earth into a utopia, presiding over it as a benevolent supergod.

Hand-picked by Moore, writer Neil Gaiman took to the challenge with relish. He planned three story arcs called "The Golden Age," "The Silver Age," and "The Dark Age." Gaiman's scripts were interpreted by artist Mark Buckingham, who used a different art style for every story. Issues #17–#22 (June 1990–August 1991) comprised "The Golden Age," telling stories of the people in the new utopia, and how they viewed or interacted with Miracleman. Two more *Miracleman* issues were published, and another completed, but #24 (August 1993) was destined to be the final *Miracleman* from Eclipse; the company closed shop shortly thereafter. In addition to the two dozen *Miracleman* issues, Eclipse had released five trade paperback collections; the miniseries *Miracleman: Apocrypha* (which featured out-of-continuity stories by outside writers and artists, 1991–1992); *The Miracleman Family* (featuring reprints of 1950s Anglo material and released in 1988); and the stand-alone *Miracleman 3-D*. Miracleman also appeared as a character in the crossover miniseries *Total Eclipse* (1988–1989).

In April 1996, Image Comics co-creator Todd McFarlane bought Eclipse's assets, planning to bring back several of the properties, including *Miracleman*. Unfortunately, the ownership of the rights to the character was in question, with Gaiman and Buckingham owning a portion, and the once Eclipse-owned rights on shaky ground, keeping future *Miracleman* comic book material in doubt. Despite this, McFarlane featured Mike Moran in cameo scenes in *Hellspawn* #6–#7 (February–April 2001), and released limited-edition artwork of Miracleman, as well as Miracleman statues.

The legal battle between Gaiman and McFarlane over the rights to Miracleman ended in a stunning surprise. It turned out that Dez Skinn had never actually purchased the rights to Marvelman from his creator Mick Anglo, who sold them to Marvel Comics in 2009. Marvel changed the character's name from Miracleman back to Marvelman, and published reprints of many of his 1950s stories in 2010. It remains to be seen what further plans Marvel has for Marvelman/Miracleman. At this point it is unknown whether the Moore and Gaiman *Miracleman* stories will ever return to print, or whether Gaiman will get to complete his unfinished *Miracleman* saga. —*AM & PS*

Miss Fury

Several superheroes started life in comic books before going on to be adapted for newspapers. These include heroes that are household names today: Superman, Spider-Man, and Batman. Unusually, Miss Fury's creation was the other way around. Her first newspaper appearance was in April 1941, and she is considered the first major costumed superheroine in comics history, beating the likes of Wonder Woman, the Black Cat, and many others into print. Her creator, Tarpe Mills, was a pioneer herself, being almost certainly the first woman to work on a superhero strip and certainly the first to create one. She was involved in some of the very earliest comic book series in the late 1930s, working on the likes of *The Ivy Menace, Drama of Hollywood* and *The Purple Zombie* for titles such as Centaur's *Amazing Mystery Funnies* and *Star Comics*. Mills was born June Mills but adopted the more ambiguous forename Tarpe so that her predominantly male readership would not realize that their favorite strips were drawn by a woman.

Like Mills, Miss Fury had an alter ego; in civilian life she was (in best Bruce Wayne fashion) wealthy socialite Marla Drake, who makes a fateful decision when on her way to a costumed ball: Discovering that someone else is going to the ball wearing the same costume as hers, she desperately hunts for a suitable replacement and settles upon an African ceremonial costume made out of a panther skin that had been used in magic rituals. The figure-hugging, all-black outfit, with ears, claws, and a tail, was certainly one of the most striking to be seen in the early days of comics. Right from the start, it brings our heroine adventure and peril. With athletic prowess, keen detective skills, and a super-costume bar none, Miss Fury is equipped to take on America's hoodlums and crooks.

In her first few months of publication, the superheroine met the dashing detective Dan Carey and the seductive spy Erica von Kampf, as well as assorted criminals, con men, and damsels in distress. At the outset of World War II, many of Miss Fury's adventures were set in Brazil, where she fought the bald, monocled General Bruno—the very personification of a Teutonic villain—and his Nazi battalions, hidden in a hollow mountain. Another frequent nemesis was the glamorous Era, with her guerrilla fighters, and the ever-present von Kampf could always be relied upon to pop up with an evil scheme or two. But Miss Fury was every bit the femme fatale herself, and had a string of allies including Gary Hale, Fingers Martin, Albino Joe, and her admirer from afar, Detective Cary.

Mills may not have been as polished as some of her contemporaries, but she was nonetheless a fine storyteller, and her never-ending cliff-hangers (in many ways, the strip was one long narrative) moved along at a frantic pace. Mills appreciated glamour, and the feature was characterized by its succession of beautiful women in elaborate, fashionable, and often risqué clothing. She was something of a glamour girl herself, posing seductively for press releases, complete with her ever-present white cat, and she closely resembled the star of her strip, Marla Drake. With its bold linework and action-filled plots, the Miss Fury series was a natural for the burgeoning comic book industry, and Timely Comics (better known now as Marvel Comics) released eight issues of *Miss Fury* reprints between 1943 and 1946, with pin-ups and cut-out dolls thrown in for good measure.

Miss Fury ran for a very respectable ten years, outlasting most of its superhero rivals but also courting controversy. In the strip's later years, Marla Drake adopted a child rescued from the clutches of the evil Doctor Diman, little knowing that he was the son of her weak-willed ex-fiancé, Hale, and her arch-nemesis von Kampf. Just as daring was one 1947 exotic costume that was so revealing (by the standards of the day) that thirty-seven newspapers promptly canceled the strip. At the height of its popularity, the feature was printed in hundreds of newspapers across the United States, as well as in Europe, South America, and even Australia, but in 1952, like many other adventure strips, it was finally laid to rest. The taste in newspapers was increasingly leaning toward sophisticated soap opera strips and humor features, and Mills retired from comics.

In later years, Miss Fury was introduced to curious newcomers through further reprints, including a 1979 book collection from Archival Press and a short lived series from Adventure Comics in 1991. —*DAR*

Moon Knight

Ever since the creation of Batman in 1939, that character has been a constant source of inspiration both for DC Comics and its competitors. Marvel Comics' most transparent Batman clone was Moon Knight, who built up a sizeable cult following of his own, despite his obvious debt to the Caped Crusader. Moon Knight's first appearances came in two issues of *Werewolf by Knight* (#32 and #33) in late 1975, by writer Doug Moench and artist Don Perlin. Within a year, reader reaction was so strong that the character fought the Werewolf once more and starred in his own solo strip in *Marvel Spotlight* #28 and #29.

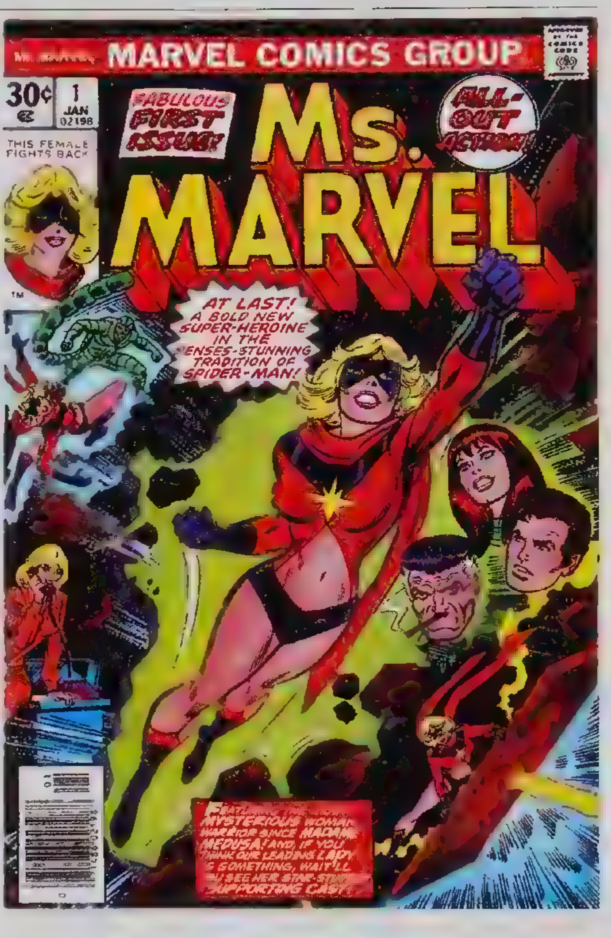
In his civilian life, Moon Knight was three people—or, more accurately, three separate personalities/personas of one rather schizophrenic man. Initially, there was just one man, Marc Spector, an academic's son who rejected his father's restrictive way of life and followed his own, more reckless path, first with the CIA and then as a mercenary under the vicious, tattooed Ronald Bushman. During one mission, Spector stumbles upon Bushman looting an archaeological dig in Sudan and about to kill the daughter of his recent victim, the dig's leader, Dr. Alraune. Spector saves the daughter, Marlene, but seemingly at the cost of his own life. However, local followers of the Egyptian moon god Khonshu drag his lifeless body to a nearby temple, and there he is miraculously resurrected. Back in the United States, with new love Marlene and old mercenary pal John Paul Duchamp ("Frenchie") in tow, Spector vows to turn his back on his past misdeeds and begin his life anew as a force for good.

Spurred on by either schizophrenia or brilliance, Spector adopted two new personalities to aid him in his new calling: Steven Grant (millionaire philanthropist) and Jake Lockley (a rough-edged cab driver, always on the lookout for tips from his underworld informer, Crawley). As Moon Knight, Spector/Grant/Lockley donned a white, caped, hooded costume (almost an inverse of Batman's black getup) and scoured the night sky from his moon-copter, piloted by Frenchie. The many similarities to Batman are unmistakable: the same creature-of-the-night ploy, millionaire playboy alter ego, loyal servant, helicopter, mansion, and driven personality. In addition, longtime artist Bill Sienkiewicz was an obvious follower of legendary Batman artist Neal Adams. However, Sienkiewicz (who came aboard for Moon Knight's first, extended solo series as a backup in *Hulk* magazine from 1978 to 1980) was also the strip's saving grace, as he pushed and transformed his initially derivative—if attractive—artistry into one of the medium's most incendiary talents.

After the *Hulk* series and a solo outing in *Marvel Premiere,* Moon Knight was finally awarded his own title in late 1980 (aptly called *Moon Knight),* which Moench and Sienkiewicz gradually built into a fan favorite. Within a couple of years, Sienkiewicz had taken elements from a wide range of sources, including illustrators Bob Peake and Bernie Fuchs and cartoonist Ralph Steadman, to make his work on the comic the most daring and innovative on the stands. The comic featured regular villains such as the Werewolf, Bushman, and the Midnight Man, but it was the literate tone and experimental art that readers loved. However, while the title was a critical success, it was never an enormous hit with the wider readership, and with issue #15 in 1981, it was one of the first comics to be distributed solely to specialty shops; a bold move that would later be adopted across the comics industry.

Sienkiewicz left the comic with issue #30 and it was canceled eight issues later, but over the following two decades the title was revived four times by a variety of creators. The longest-lasting of these—*Marc Spector, Moon Knight*—ran for sixty issues and featured guest appearances from Marvel's edgier heroes, such as the Punisher and Ghost Rider, whose hard-hitting strips the new comic was trying to emulate (right down to a bullet-proof Kevlar costume). Moon Knight was also an occasional member of the Defenders and of both East and West Coast branches of the Avengers, but he has always made more sense on his own.

After a 1999 miniseries, Moon Knight returned in 2006, in a new monthly comics series that was initially written by crime novelist Charlie Huston and drawn by David Finch. Moon Knight has recently joined the Secret Avengers, and in 2011, Marvel started a new *Moon Knight* series written by Brian Michael Bendis, with art by Alex Maleev. —*DAR*


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
30¢
1 JAN 02198
THIS FEMALE FIGHTS BACK
FABULOUS FIRST ISSUE!
Ms. MARVEL
ALL-OUT ACTION!
AT LAST! A BOLD NEW SUPER-HEROINE IN THE SENSES-STUNNING TRADITION OF SPIDER-MAN!
MYSTERIOUS WOMAN WARRIOR SINCE MADAME MEDUSA! AND, IF YOU THINK OUR LEADING LADY IS SOMETHING, WAIT'LL YOU SEE HER STAR-STUDDED SUPPORTING CAST!

Ms. Marvel #1 © 1977 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by John Romita.)

Ms. Marvel

For a long time, Marvel Comics has been ever-vigilant in its quest to preserve ownership of characters and names. This has led to a host of female counterparts to male stars, such as Spider-Woman and She Hulk, and a plethora of heroes with the word "Marvel" in their names. Having secured copyright on the names Captain Marvel (some three decades after the Fawcett star first hit the stands), Marvel Boy, and Marvel Girl, it was Ms. Marvel's turn at stardom. The job of fleshing out the new character's identity fell to writer/editor Gerry Conway. In the first issue's editorial (*Ms. Marvel* #1, January 1977), Conway fell over himself to stress his feminist credentials and practically apologized for not being female, but rhetoric aside, this liberated heroine was cast very much in the typical, action-packed Marvel mold.

Ms. Marvel was Carol Danvers, a character created by Roy Thomas and artist Gene Colan, previously seen as a NASA security chief in the early days of the 1960s Captain Marvel strip, but now branching out into magazine editing, as the Gloria Steinem of the Marvel Universe. Unbeknownst to her, during a heated battle years earlier, when she was caught in an explosion next to Captain Marvel, some of his alien genetic structure had melded with hers, creating a Kree/human hybrid. This manifested itself in blackouts during which she donned a more revealing, navel-baring version of the Captain's duds and flew off to batter ne'er-do-wells. In time, her two personalities merged and she acquired a family, a new writer (the X-Men's Chris Claremont), a (navel-covering) costume revamp, and her own villains. The latter included future X-Men villain Mystique (in issue #16), Deathbird, Steeplejack, and Hecate. Later developments included a guest appearance by Captain Marvel, in issue #19, and a zippy new black costume designed by the late Dave Cockrum in the following issue. However, by its twenty-third issue, the comic was dead (the unpublished issue #24 would have debuted another future X-Men regular, Rogue).

Despite (or because of) the comic's cancellation, Ms. Marvel immediately resurfaced in *The Avengers* (from #181) and experienced the first of many traumatic events, when she suddenly became pregnant by an interdimensional admirer called Marcus (son of occasional Avengers foe, Immortus). Within a week, she gave birth to an infant Marcus; it turned out to be a confusing plan to allow him to escape his otherworldly imprisonment, as he instantaneously grew to maturity and the two went off into the sunset, hand in hand. Except, of course, it was all an evil mind-control plot, and an embittered Carol Danvers reappeared a year later, only to be zapped by Rogue, who stole her powers and mind. The X-Men's Professor X restored some of her consciousness, but after convalescing with the team for a while, she was captured by evil aliens, the Brood, who experimented on her, ultimately unleashing her full, Kree-engineered cosmic power. Confused? You will be....

Now calling herself Binary (in *X-Men* #164, 1982) and drawing almost limitless power from a "white hole," she punched Rogue into orbit, and overcome with remorse, hooked up with a bunch of intergalactic pirates called the Starjammers, leaving the known universe for the rest of the 1980s. On eventually returning to Earth, she rejoined the Avengers, put on her earlier costume, and started calling herself Warbird (for no obvious reason). As a reasonably settled member of the Avengers, the future should have been secure for Danvers, but as her powers inexplicably began to wane, she turned to the bottle and was eventually court-martialed out of the team for reckless behavior. Post-millennial developments included a move to Seattle, where the soused superheroine hit rock-bottom and joined Alcoholics Anonymous. This led ultimately to a recall (her third) to the Avengers, where she looks set to stay for the duration. Her own new *Ms. Marvel* series was launched in 2006 and continued into 2010. *—DAR*

Multiculturalism

During comics' Golden Age (1938–1954), the nascent medium of superhero comic books was overrun with cultural stereotypes, a manifestation of societal prejudices widely, and sometimes innocently, held at the time. Captain Aero's "little Chinese pal," Chop Suey; the Lone Ranger's "faithful Indian companion," Tonto; and Mandrake the Magician's "obedient African aide", Lothar, were among the characters that marginalized the value of minorities.

THE DAYS OF "KRAUTS" AND "JAPS"

To be fair, there was no bigoted board of comics creators orchestrating these characterizations. Comic books, like movies, novels, and radio, simply reflected America's perception of non-whites as second-class citizens—and minorities were in no position to argue at the time. Interestingly, Germans—other than Adolf Hitler, a short, comical-looking man ripe for caricature—were rarely stereotyped physically, given their physiological similarities to Anglo Americans. Yet they spoke with thick accents and were referred to by the derogatory term "Krauts." However, the Japanese—"Japs"—were rendered with fangs or with buck teeth, colored with yellow skin, and sometimes represented with pointed ears. An offensive stereotype by contemporary standards, granted, but to the U.S. mindset in the early 1940s, these were the devils that bombed Pearl Harbor, so they "got what they deserved" with these depictions.

And they "got what they deserved" from the superheroes. Comics covers routinely showed their stars attacking Japanese (and Germans, and on a few occasions, Italians), but perhaps no cover was more graphic in its anti-Japanese sentiment than Timely (Marvel) Comics' *The Human Torch* #12 (1943), presenting the flaming hero *burning* off the arm of a fanged Japanese torturer. Take that, you rat!

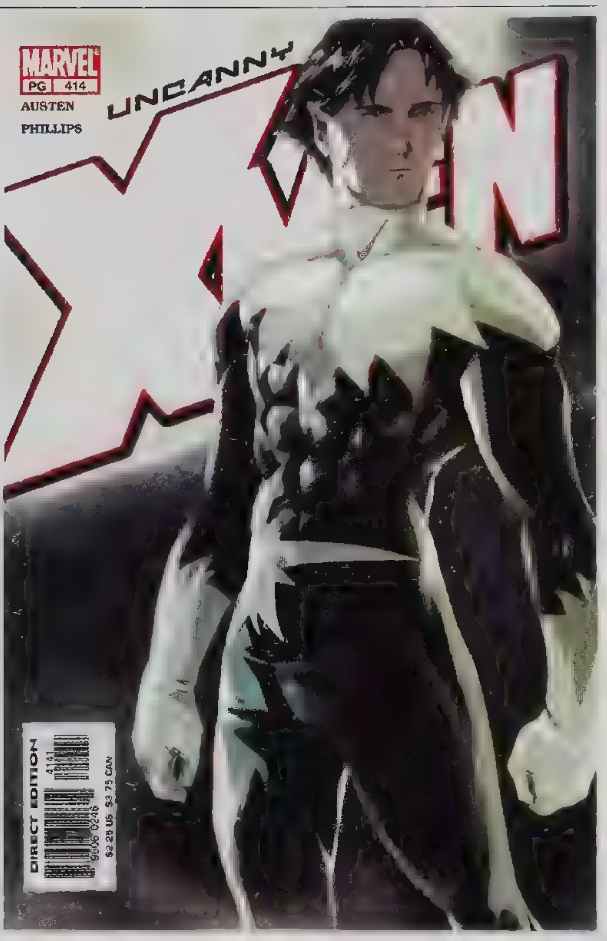
The Torch's acrimonious foe-turned-ally, Namor the Sub-Mariner, was comics' first mixed-race superhero, the offspring of a land dweller and a water breather. His multicultural heritage was often referenced in passing but never fully explored during the Golden Age. Some comics historians have theorized that Namor's patented anger stems from his crossbreeding—he never felt truly accepted by either of his races, leading him to take out his frustrations on others.

"Oriental" menaces, representing the "Yellow Peril" fear of world conquest, were a 1930s staple of the "pulp" magazines, with characters like Shiwan Khan from *The Shadow*, and author Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu, inspiring comic book villains like the Claw. First seen in Lev Gleason's *Silver Streak Comics* #1 (1939), the Claw was a sharp-toothed, insidious monster, with pointy ears, razor-sharp fingernails, fiery breath, and the ability to grow to humongous proportions. World War II only worsened the Asian stereotype. Kato, the Japanese houseboy and high-kicking companion to the Green Hornet, became a Filipino after the Pearl Harbor bombing.

On the rare occasions they appeared in print, African Americans were shown as man servants or comic-relief sidekicks. Mexicans were filthy bandits, as Zorro and other Western heroes were constantly reminded. Native Americans grunted in broken English, as did Chief Skullface, nemesis of the Golden Age hero Black Owl, who routinely threatened to "scalpum" his feathered foe.

EARLY MULTICULTURALISM

Yet favorable multicultural depictions did occur during the Golden Age, most notably in *Blackhawk*. Premiering in Quality's *Military Comics* #1 (1941), the Blackhawks were a squad of international fighter pilots, crusading for the Allied forces but pledging allegiance to no single country—although their number included a buck-toothed and portly cook, Chop Chop. Chinese typecasting was nowhere to be seen, though, in "Carnival of Fiends," the Torch tale in *All Winners Comics* #1 (1941): Chinese are referred to as Chinese Americans, and they rally behind the Allied war effort.



Uncanny X-Men #414 © 2002 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Steve Uy.)

After World War II and into the 1950s, superheroes evoked a more unified world viewpoint. Tonto received his own comic book from Dell (1951–1959), which appeared on the stands with Magazine Enterprises' *Straight Arrow* (1950–1956), starring a Native American protagonist who fought rustlers and white thieves. Superman and Batman joined England's Knight and Squire, France's Musketeer, "South America's" Gaucho, and Italy's Legionary in "The Club of Heroes" in *World's Finest Comics* #89 (1957). This trend spilled over into radio and television as well. "The most explicitly progressive [radio] series was *[The Adventures of] Superman*, which had its hero fighting racial and religious bigotry for several years after the war," commented author J. Fred MacDonald in *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960* (1979). Wrote MacDonald: "The appearance of the non-Anglo-Saxon heroes—the Indian brave, Straight Arrow; the Latino avenger, [TV's] Cisco Kid—also guided postwar youngsters toward tolerance."

There were exceptions to this growing depiction of diversity: Blacks mostly disappeared from comics. The spread of Communism made villains of Russians and Chinese, trends that continued into the 1960s. Prize Comics' *Fighting American* (1954–1955) lampooned Soviets with bad guys like Poison Ivan. Marvel even devoted a short-lived series to an "Oriental" villain: *The Yellow Claw* (1956–1957), starring a sinister mastermind who embodied every negative stereotype ever assigned to Asians: He was bald, slant-eyed, yellow-skinned, pointy-eared, and had long fingernails and a "Fu Manchu" goatee. In contrast, this series also introduced a positive Chinese American character: FBI agent Jimmy Woo, a highly trained and resourceful lawman dedicated to bringing the Yellow Claw to justice.

THE 1960S SPARK ENLIGHTENMENT

After writer/editor Stan Lee inaugurated the Marvel universe with the publication of *Fantastic Four* #1 (1961), he placed his superheroes in New York City instead of a fictional metropolis, and Marvel's artists started drawing people of color into the comics. At first, the multicultural inclusions were subtle, like a black pedestrian in the background, but by the mid-1960s, non-whites ascended to positions of prominence. In *Fantastic Four* #50 (1966) Stan Lee and Jack Kirby introduced Native American Wyatt Wingfoot, who became a long-standing supporting-cast member of the series. In issue #52 (1966) Lee and Kirby created Prince T'Challa, better known as the black superhero called the Black Panther. And agent Jimmy Woo returned in Marvel's *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.,* engaging in high-tech (for the times) espionage epics that borrowed heavily from the James Bond movies.

None of Lee's series better advocated cultural tolerance than *X-Men.* First seen in 1963, the X-Men were mutants—the next step on the evolutionary ladder—who fought to protect the humans who distrusted them. While a groundbreaking metaphor for racial harmony, *X-Men* originally played it safe, making each of its mutant characters Caucasian.

Despite the multicultural inroads paved by Lee and other Marvel writers during the 1960s, cold-war pigeonholing had yet to fade: Iron Man's origin was rooted in the Vietnam War, and the hero battled the Chinese troublemaker, Mandarin, and a Vietcong villain named Wong Chu. Despite occasional non-flattering portrayals, Marvel's comics depicted a world of color and diversity, even with the company's misfit heroes, the green Hulk and the orange Thing.

When ABC's live-action *The Green Hornet* (1966–1967) TV show debuted, its producers expected its lead—clean-cut Caucasian hunk Van Williams—to become a heartthrob, but were blindsided when Asian import Bruce Lee, playing sidekick (emphasis on the kick) Kato, stole the show with his dazzling martial arts abilities. Lee was one of the few non-white actors on television at the time, but before long people of varying ethnicities became more visible.

Through most of the 1960s, DC Comics' series stayed exclusively Caucasian, with the exception of a handful of aliens like the green-skinned Martian Manhunter (who became a white man in his secret identity of John Jones). But they did offer one-page public-service announcements extolling the virtues of ethnic tolerance. DC changed its stripes in *Justice League of America* (JLA) #57 (1967), with "Man, Thy Name is—Brother!" by scribe Gardner Fox (who is acknowledged among some comics historians as a selfless humanitarian). "One man is very much like another—no matter what the name of the god he worships—or the color of his skin," Fox's opening begins. The tale involves the intervention of three Justice Leaguers—the Flash, Green Arrow, and Hawkman, plus the JLA's "mascot" Snapper Carr—into the personal lives of three non-white Americans—a young black, a Native American, and a native of India—who struggle against barriers spawned by racial prejudice. The issue's cover, by artists Carmine Infantino and Murphy Anderson, depicts the heroes and their friends of color clasping hands before the symbol of the United Nations.

DC continued to take slow but deliberate steps to portray non-Caucasians in their superhero comics, with varying results. *The Brave and* *the Bold* (*B&B*) #71 (1967) introduced Batman's "old friend" John Whitebird, a Native American, but contains a wealth of unintentionally offensive references, including Batman's greeting of Whitebird ("Holy Peacepipes! Are you going on the warpath again?"). Four issues later, *B&B* #75 (1967) takes place in Gotham City's Chinatown, a borough that embraces its native heritage and modern Westernisms (Chinese American teens beam "Cool!" and "Marv!"), and largely avoids the stereotypes seen in issue #71, although issue #75's villain is a Yellow Claw–like conqueror called Shahn-Zi.

MAINSTREAM MULTICULTURALISM

In the late 1960s through the early 1970s, multiculturalism hit the American mainstream. Non-white actors appeared on TV programs as diverse as *Star Trek* (1966–1969) and *Hawaii Five-O* (1968–1980), and in movies like *Shaft* (1971). Superhero comics followed suit: the African American Falcon became the partner of Captain America; Wonder Woman learned martial arts from a Chinese teacher named I-Ching; and Green Lantern and Green Arrow hopped into a pickup truck to traverse the American landscape, seeking solutions for racism and other social cancers.

Luke Cage, Hero for Hire #1 (1972) was the first American comic book starring a black superhero, but numerous others followed, including *Black Goliath*, *Black Panther*, and *Black Lightning*. Marvel then premiered a headlining Chinese superhero, Shang-Chi (a.k.a. Master of Kung Fu) in *Special Marvel Edition* #15 (1973). Shang-Chi was a hero of great nobility and determination, but his father, the archetypical Fu Manchu (yes, *that* Fu Manchu), added yet another sinister Chinese conqueror to contemporary comics. Compelling characterization, memorable storytelling (first by Steve Englehart and Jim Starlin, then by Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy), and an international film and TV kung fu craze made Shang-Chi a hit: *Special Marvel Edition* was renamed *Master of Kung Fu* (*MOKF*) with issue #17, and kept kicking for 125 issues.

MOKF's success spawned a fistful of martial-arts titles from a variety of publishers, some of which featured white heroes in Asian settings (Marvel's *Iron Fist*). Marvel's *The Deadly Hands of Kung Fu,* a black-and-white magazine-sized comic, introduced the White Tiger, the first Puerto Rican superhero. Also appearing during this period was Mantis, a Vietnamese member of Marvel's conventional superteam the Avengers (appearing in print, quite unusually, at the height of the Vietnam War). In subsequent years, Asians as martial artists (and, narrowing the trend, Japanese as ninjas) have become a staple of comics, with DC's Lady Shiva and Valiant's Rai among their number.

THE INTEGRATED SUPERHERO UNIVERSE

By the mid-1970s, superhero comic books had become fully integrated. The X-Men were reintroduced in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (1975) with a new, multicultural roster: Cyclops (Anglo American), Colossus (Russian), Storm (African), Banshee (Irish), Wolverine (Canadian), Sunfire (Japanese), Nightcrawler (German), and Thunderbird (Native American). The X-Men's original message of cultural tolerance became even more profound given the team's color mix, a theme that has yet to fade: Despite their differences, these mutants work together as a unit and live together as a family. Sir Ian McKellen, the distinguished British actor who portrayed the evil mutant Magneto in the live-action blockbusters *X-Men* (2000) and *X2: X-Men United* (2003), remarked favorably of the X-Men's message of harmony at the 2003 British Independent Film Awards: "X-Men and its story about mutants, about people who feel disaffected with society, and whom society is hard on, appeals most to young blacks, young Jews, and young gays."

The cultural composition of the X-Men established a template upon which the contemporary superhero team has been built. Numerous supergroups created or revived in the wake of *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 have contained a multicultural mix (some including extraterrestrials for good measure).

Other teams have been built specifically around ethnicity, or a cultural connection. DC's Global Guardians are just that: superheroes assembled from around the world, like Africa's Doctor Mist, Israel's Seraph, and Brazil's Green Flame (a.k.a. Fire of the Justice League). TV's *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* (1990) assembled a group of teenage environmental protectors, summoned from different regions of Earth by the goddess Gaia. A 1996 CD-Rom comic unveiled the Jewish Hero Corps, led by Menorah Man, and Mystic Comics' *Tribal Force* #1 (2002) introduced a little-known group of Native American superheroes.

Occasionally, non-Anglo superheroes have starred in their own comics, including, but by no means limited to, El Diablo (Latino), the vampire hunter Blade (black), Shaloman (Jewish), and Spawn (black). Ethnic superheroes and supporting cast members have become common: *Superman* titles, for example, have included in their cast the Hispanic hero Gangbuster and African American hero Steel. Created by writer Louise Simonson and artist Jon Bogdanove, Steel is engineer John Henry Irons, who created an armored high-tech battlesuit that gives him superhuman strength. (The character was the star of *Steel* (1987), a poorly received live-action feature film starring basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal in the title role.) And whites and non-whites have formed teams, such as Power Man (a.k.a. Luke Cage, black), Iron Fist (white), and Cloak (black) and Dagger (white). Created by Bill Mantlo and Ed Hannigan in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #64 (March 1982), Tyrone Johnson and Tandy Bowen were two teenage runaways who bonded as friends. A criminal scientist subjected them to a synthetic drug that unleashed their mutant powers, and they became Cloak and Dagger, a pair of costumed vigilantes who aid fellow runaways and battle criminals who deal in drugs.

Prejudice and discrimination have been commonly explored through these tales of integrated heroes. For example, Amazing-Man, a black superhero retrofitted into the 1940s cast of *All-Star Squadron* with issue #23 (1982), stood up for racial equality at a time when Hitler preached ethnic cleansing. Despite cultural taboos, some interracial romances have occurred, including DC's (black) Bronze Tiger and (white) Gypsy, and Marvel's (green, formerly white) She-Hulk and (Native American) Wyatt Wingfoot. No mixed relationship has raised more eyebrows than the marriage of the Avengers' Scarlet Witch (a white mutant) and Vision (a synthetic human)!

MULTICULTURALISM TODAY

There are large number of African American superheroes in comics today. In the 1990s, DC Comics' Milestone imprint introduced a long line of black superheroes such as Static and Icon. In September 2011 DC launched *Batwing*, a new series about the first black hero to be a member of the "Batman Family." Cyborg, a black youth, was one of the original members in *The New Teen Titans*. African American Green Lantern John Stewart appears both in comics and animation. DC has also recently introduced new African American versions of classic heroes such as Firestorm, Mr. Terrific, and the Spectre. Marvel's African American heroes include X-Men's Bishop, Brother Voodoo, the second cyborg Deathlok, and War Machine. African American superheroes in the movies include the title character of *Hancock* (2008) and Frozone in *The Incredibles* (2004). Like its Ultimate comics line, Marvel movies have even reimagined S.H.I.E.L.D. Director Nick Fury as African American, as played by Samuel L. Jackson.

The growing number of Latino superheroes include DC's third Blue Beetle (Jaime Reyes) and second Question (Renee Montoya), and Marvel's new Power Man (Victor Alvarez). Marvel also has El Aguila, Firebird, and Sunspot. Spider-Man 2099 and Green Lantern Kyle Rayner are both half-Irish, half-Latino; the 2011 *Ultimate Spider-Man* is Miles Morales, who is half-black and half-Latino.

Among the many Native American superheroes at Marvel are Red Wolf, *The X-Force*'s Warpath, *Alpha Flight*'s Shaman and Talisman, *X-Factor*'s Forge, *The New Mutants*' Danielle Moonstar, and Echo from *Daredevil*. DC's superpowered Super Chief debuted in 1961, followed by other Native American heroes like the *Legion of Super-Heroes*' Dawnstar, and the *Justice League*'s Manitou Dawn and Manitou Raven. Writer Steve Englehart co-created the Native American trickster hero Coyote, who debuted at Eclipse Comics.

There are as yet relatively few Asian American superheroes in American comics, such as the third Batgirl (Cassandra Cain), and Ryan Choi as DC's latest Atom, Marvel has an entire team of Japanese superheroes. Big Hero 6, originally led by X-Men's Sunfire. Jimmy Woo now heads his own Marvel superhero team, the Agents of Atlas.

Even though many of the founding fathers of the superhero genre were Jewish American, there have been relatively few explicitly Jewish superheroes in mainstream comics. However, Chris Claremont and John Byrne introduced Kitty Pryde, later known as Shadowcat, as a Jewish teenager in *Uncanny X-Men* #129 (January 1980). *Fantastic Four* Vol. 3 #56 (August 2002) finally revealed that Ben Grimm, the Thing, is Jewish (apparently as his co-creator, Jack Kirby, had intended). Other Jewish heroes at Marvel include Moon Knight and the Israeli superheroine Sabra. The X-Men's longtime nemesis Magneto was imprisoned in Auschwitz as a boy for being Jewish, and his children Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch are therefore half-Jewish. DC's Jewish American heroes include the new Batwoman (Kate Kane) and Ragman (Rory Regan), a vigilante in a ragged costume who debuted in *Ragman* #1 (August–September 1976). His creators Robert Kanigher and Joe Kubert intended Regan as Irish, but he was later retconned as Jewish.

The Kuwaiti company Teshkeel Comics publishes a superhero series *The 99*, based on Islamic culture, which is available in the United States in English, as well as in Arabic languages in other nations. The title refers to the ninety-nine names, or attributes, of Allah, many of which are virtues to which mortals can aspire. American superhero comics pros, such as Fabian Nicieza and Stuart Moore, have worked on the series; Moore and Nicieza even wrote *JLA/The 99*, a 2010 miniseries in which the 99 met DC's Justice League.

Lately there have been a growing number of gay superheroes. Marvel's first gay superhero was Northstar, created by writer/artist John Byrne in 1979, as a member of Alpha Flight. Two newer gay characters are Hulkling and Wiccan in Marvel's *Young Avengers*. The first superhero at DC who was clearly intended to be gay was Extrano, created by writer Steve Englehart and artist Joe Staton as a member of the New Guardians, in 1988. Today the highest profile DC superhero who is openly gay is the new Batwoman, Kate Kane. Other gay superheroes at DC include the new Question (Renee Montoya), and Apollo and Midnighter of WildStorm's *The Authority*.

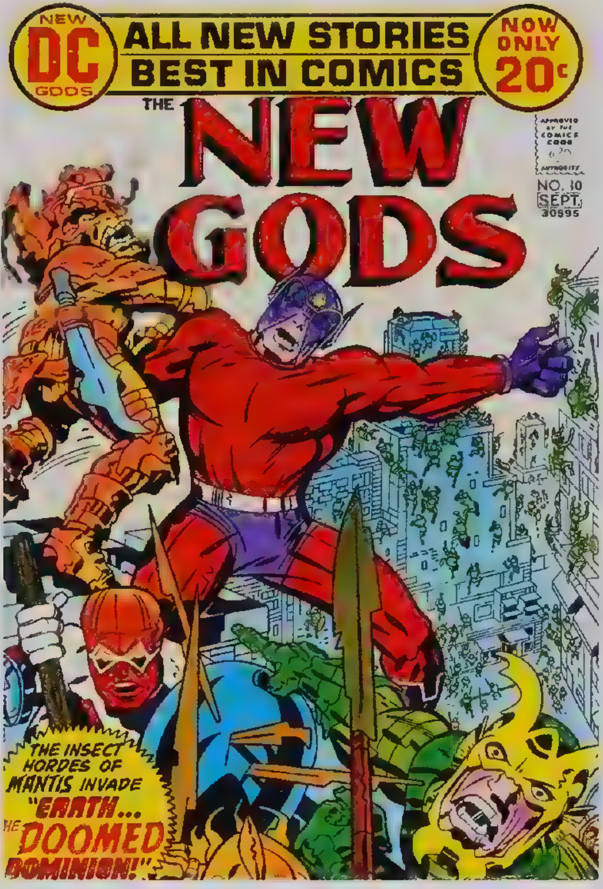
In fact, superhero multiculturalism has become so widespread that the 2011 *Thor* film features a multiracial cast playing the Norse gods of Asgard! —*ME, PS, & GM*

The New Gods

Jack Kirby was, undoubtedly, one of the most important creators ever to work in comics. Comics historian Mike Benton called him "the American artist who best represents what comic books are all about." Kirby's many creations (with writer Stan Lee) for Marvel Comics in the 1960s reinvigorated the entire industry. When DC Comics boss Carmine Infantino lured Kirby away from Marvel in 1970 with the promise of total artistic freedom, it was surely the coup of the decade. Kirby set himself up with his own editorial office in California and effectively created his own line of interconnected comics, which have now come to be known as the Fourth World series. Three titles premiered in 1971—*The New Gods, The Forever People,* and *Mister Miracle*—to which was added Kirby's eccentric vision of *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen,* which he had picked up at DC's insistence. Every two weeks, one of the four titles would hit the streets with a new installment of its story, written, drawn, and edited by Kirby, at a punishing work rate that only he could have met.

The New Gods would become the central book of the tetralogy, with a story in issue #7, "The Pact," at last explaining how the various comics all knitted together. The story details the stormy conflict between two far-off planets: the Eden-like New Genesis and the monstrous Apokolips. To cement peace between the two worlds, their leaders—Highfather of New Genesis and Darkseid of Apokolips—exchange newborn sons, Scott Free and Orion, as hostages against hostilities ever resuming. Some years later, Darkseid learns of something called the Anti-Life Equation (about which Kirby was always rather vague; suffice it to say that it was something terrifying), which was hidden on Earth, and he heads off, with numerous evil (and bizarre) minions in tow, to find it, setting off a new war of the "gods" with humanity in the balance.

The four comics each had different approaches to the ongoing tale. *The New Gods* starred Orion, recently arrived on Earth with his devil-may-care colleague Lightray, and was the most wide-ranging and bombastic of the Fourth World series, featuring colossal battle scenes and panoramic artwork. As the son of the evil Darkseid, Orion was an unusually complex, savage hero, despite his peaceful upbringing on New Genesis, and *The New Gods* explored his constant battle with both his father's minions and his own explosive lineage. The other exchanged son, Scott Free, also came to Earth, fleeing his militaristic upbringing on Apokolips, and assumed the identity of top escape artist Mister Miracle. Complete with cantankerous and diminutive assistant, Oberon, and statuesque, ex-stormtrooper girlfriend (and future wife), Big Barda, a fellow Apokolips escapee, *Mister Miracle* was a more lighthearted and traditional superhero title.


NEW DC GODS
ALL NEW STORIES BEST IN COMICS
NOW ONLY 20¢
THE NEW GODS
NO. 10 SEPT.
THE INSECT HORDES OF MANTIS INVADE "EARTH... THE DOOMED DOMINION!"

The New Gods #10 © 1972 DC Comics. (Cover art by Jack Kirby and Mike Royer.)

The Forever People were five happy-go-lucky teenagers from New Genesis: Mark Moonrider, Beautiful Dreamer, Big Bear, Vykin the Black, and Serifan. They could merge together to form a superpowered fighter called the Infinity Man. Like Orion and Mister Miracle, the Forever People were on Earth to fight Darkseid, but they were younger and more idealistic, and, in some ways, were Kirby's take on the hippie movement. *Jimmy Olsen* was the most eccentric of the titles. In it, Jimmy and Superman teamed up with a new Newsboy Legion and Guardian (made up of the sons of the 1940s kid gang of that name and the clone of their superhero protector), and with renegade bikers called "the Hairies," to fight Darkseid's scientists. It was Kirby's most prophetic series—anticipating developments in DNA research, cloning, and the Internet—as well as his most bizarre, featuring alien vampires, miniature Jimmy Olsens, the Loch Ness monster, and comedian Don Rickles and his invented double "Goody Rickels."

The Fourth World was the most complete expression of Kirby's limitless imagination and the finest example of his monumental, explosive art. These comics were replete with double-page spreads, panoramic cosmic vistas, almost unimaginable creatures, and kinetic fight scenes. Kirby peopled the strips with as strange a collection of villains as comics have ever seen: Granny Goodness, Verman Vunderbar, Glorious Godfrey, Mantis, Desaad, Darkseid's son Kalibak, and the Black Racer (the bringer of death, who propels himself through the air on skis!). Some readers hailed the series as a masterpiece, but others found it was more than they could take in, and sales were not what DC had hoped for. The series came to an end in 1972, except for *Jimmy Olsen* and *Mister Miracle,* which carried on until 1974. Kirby's series *Kamandi, The Last Boy on Earth* (which premiered in November 1972) proved to be more popular initially, but it has been his Fourth World stories that live on in the imagination.

Five years later, in 1977, both *The New Gods* and *Mister Miracle* were creditably revived (though not by Kirby), with the latter in particular proving to be of the highest quality, but both were gone again within the year, setting the pattern of revivals for years to come. The first run of *The New Gods* was collected together in a glossy miniseries in 1984. As his last major work in comics, Kirby wrote and drew the graphic novel *The Hunger Dogs* (1985), in which he provided the ending to his "Fourth World" saga, that he had not been allowed to complete twelve years earlier.

That same year, Mattel launched a series of toys called the Super Powers (which spun off into a series of comics also drawn by Kirby), featuring numerous DC characters, including Darkseid. Kirby had wanted to end his series with a sequence of deaths, but the toy company was against the idea. Nevertheless, the toys and the *Super Powers* comic demonstrated that Darkseid himself may have been Kirby's greatest gift to DC, as the great, all-purpose villain that the company had so patently lacked before. Subsequent battles with the Legion of Super-Heroes and Superman, among others, have only served to confirm that conclusion. It was also in 1984 that Darkseid first appeared in animation, in television's

Super Friends: The Legendary Super Powers Show, voiced by Frank Welker.

From the late 1980s to 2004, there have been four *New Gods/Orion* series, two *Mister Miracle* revivals, and a single series of *The Forever People,* all with varying commercial and critical success. What none has been able to do is to build substantially on Kirby's originals. In fact, he created so many characters that there is still scope for further exploration for many years to come, as more and more fans of his work become professionals. Two fans, Paul Dini and Bruce Timm, introduced the Fourth World concepts into their acclaimed Warner Bros. cartoon, *The Adventures of Superman,* which used parts of *The New Gods* #7 in its storyline; later on, Timm's creative team showcased more Fourth World characters on the *Justice League* animated series. Michael Ironside was the voice of the animated Darkseid, with Ron Perlman (*Hellboy*) as Orion, Ioan Gruffudd (*Fantastic Four*) as Mister Miracle, Robert Morse (*Mad Men*) as Desaad, Michael Dorn (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*) as Kalibak, Arte Johnson (*Laugh-In*) as Virmin Vundabar, and Edward Asner (*Lou Grant*) (!) as Granny Goodness. Darkseid later appeared in "Darkseid Descending!", an episode of the animated series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* and as the principal villain in the direct-to-video animated film *Superman/Batman: Apocalypse* (2010), voiced by Andre Braugher.

In the comics, the New Gods were supposedly killed off in a story line that ran through *Countdown to Final Crisis* (2007–2008), and *Death of the New Gods* (2007–2008). But, predictably, they were soon resurrected in the series *Final Crisis* (2008–2009). A computer-animated Darkseid was the prime villain of the final season of the live action television series *Smallville,* in which his minions Desaad, Glorious Godfrey, and Granny Goodness, also appeared, played by real actors.

Some writers have suspected that the Fourth World was the inspiration for an even more famous property, *Star Wars.* George Lucas is a known comics fan, and the similarities between the two series are striking (like Lucas's Force and Kirby's Source), with the dark, evil father Darth Vader/Darkseid, fighting his long-lost son Luke Skywalker/Orion, who was trained by a benign, bearded mentor, Obi-Wan Kenobe/Highfather. Even the *Death Star* had a more than passing resemblance to Apokolips, but until Lucas confirms or denies the connection it must remain merely an intriguing theory. —*DAR*

New Warriors

Billed in their first issue as "heroes for the '90s," the New Warriors were a team of young Marvel superheroes who were introduced by writer Tom DeFalco and artist Ron Frenz in *Thor* #411 (December 1989). The original New Warriors line-up included the team's founder, Night Thrasher, along with Firestar, the third version of Marvel Boy, Namorita, Nova, and Speedball. Soon after the start of the new decade, the team moved into their own *The New Warriors* comic, beginning with the July 1990 issue; the series was originally written by Fabian Nicieza and drawn by Mark Bagley.

Created by DeFalco and Frenz in *Thor* #411, Night Thrasher was Dwayne Taylor, a wealthy young African American who became a costumed crime fighter, wearing a high-tech armored battlesuit. He later starred in his own short-lived solo series.

Firestar (Angelica Jones) was originally created for the animated television series *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends,* which debuted in 1981. She first appeared in Marvel universe comics continuity in *Uncanny X-Men* #193 (May 1985), and subsequently starred in her own *Firestar* comics mini-series in 1986, written by DeFalco and drawn by Mary Wilshire. She is a mutant who can manipulate microwave energy, enabling her to project heat and light, and to fly.

Marvel Boy (Vance Astrovik), who was later renamed Justice, is a mutant with telekinetic abilities. His counterpart in an alternate timeline, Vance Astro, is Major Victory of the original Guardians of the Galaxy.

Namorita is the bikini-clad daughter of Namora, the first cousin of Prince Namor the Sub-Mariner. She is part human, part Atlantean, and possesses the same superpowers as theirs: superhuman strength, flight using the wings on her heels, and the ability to breathe both in air and water. Namorita was created by Bill Everett, who also created the Sub-Mariner, and debuted in *Sub-Mariner* #50 (June 1972). Writer/artist John Byrne established that she was actually an altered clone of Namora.

Nova (Richard Rider) is a youth from Long Island, New York, who was endowed by a dying alien with superstrength, the ability to fly, and other superpowers. Created by Steve Ditko and DeFalco, Speedball (Robbie Baldwin) is a high school student who accidentally gained the power to create a force field that absorbs and reflects kinetic energy, enabling him to travel by bouncing off walls through the air. He debuted in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #22 (1988) and briefly starred in his own series that launched that same year.

Among the many young superheroes who later joined the New Warriors is Darkhawk (Chris Powell), who was created by DeFalco and artist Mike Manley and debuted in *Darkhawk* #1 (March 1991). He is a teenager who can mentally control an alien, armored, android body that has superstrength and the ability to fly.

Another New Warrior was Slapstick (Steve Harmon), who was created by writer Len Kaminski and artist James Fry in *Slapstick* #1 (November 1992). He is a student who became a being made of "electroplasm," in which he is like an animated cartoon character: indestructible and able to alter his shape.

In 2006, the New Warriors were starring in a reality TV series when they battled a group of supervillains in Stamford, Connecticut. One of the villains, Nitro, used his power to explode, killing over 600 people, including 60 children, and, apparently, three New Warriors: Night Thrasher, Namorita, and a new addition, Microbe. Public opinion turned against superheroes, and Congress passed the Superhuman Registration Act. This led to superheroes supporting the act battling superheroes who refused to register, as chronicled in Marvel's *Civil War* series (2006–2007).

A former Avenger, Firestar joined the latest version of the Young Allies. Marvel Boy/Justice and Speedball became teachers of young superhumans at the Avengers Academy. Namorita's mother Namora, who had been believed dead, proved to be alive, and is now a member of the Agents of Atlas, a team of superheroes from the 1950s, which also includes Jimmy Woo, Gorilla-Man, M-11 the Human Robot, the Uranian (the 1950s Marvel Boy), and Venus. Due to a temporal anomaly, Namorita has traveled from a point before her death to the present, and thus she has, in effect, come back to life. —*PS*

Nightwing

DC Comics' Nightwing—formerly Robin the Boy Wonder—toiled for forty years under the shadow of the Batman as comics' premier sidekick. First appearing in April 1940 in *Detective Comics* #38, Dick Grayson, the junior member of the Flying Graysons circus family, witnesses his parents' deaths in a sabotaged trapeze incident. This murder is also observed by millionaire Bruce (Batman) Wayne, who as a child had similarly watched his own parents die. Grayson becomes Wayne's ward, and after months of rigorous training in the subterranean Batcave, joins Batman as his crime-fighting ally, Robin the Boy Wonder. Clad in bright red, green, and yellow, Robin's bubbly demeanor softened Batman's harder edge, and for decades this Dynamic Duo blazed through hundreds of adventures in comic books, movie serials, radio shows, newspaper strips, and the nonsensical live-action *Batman* television series (1966–1968).This was succeeded in the fall of 1968 by an animated program, *The Batman/Superman Hour,* cut from the same campy cloth.

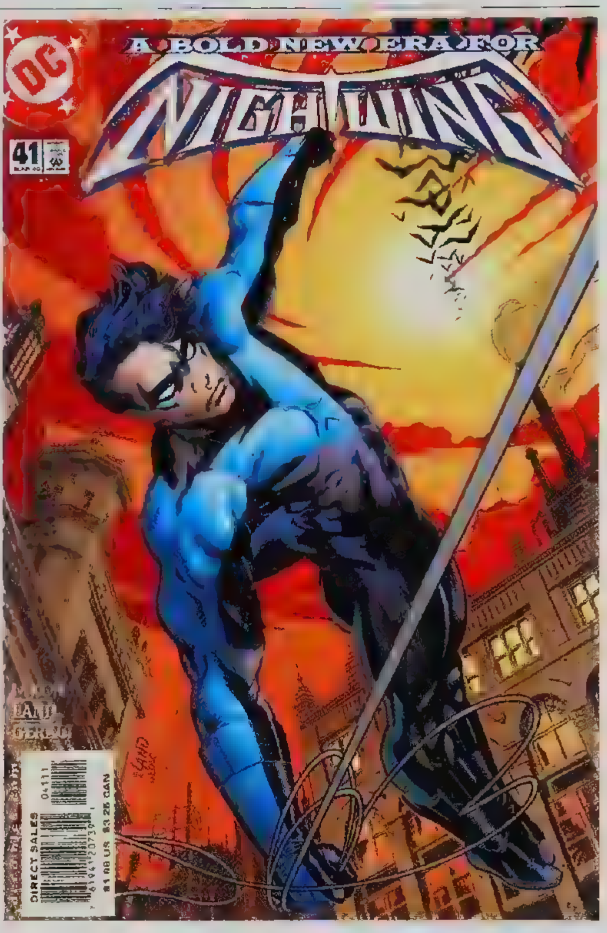
Then came the 1970s. Licking its wounds from marketplace outdistancing by Marvel Comics, former top dog, DC, implemented a host of sweeping editorial changes in an effort to win back readers. Among them was returning Batman to his roots as a "creature of the night," in a movement largely orchestrated by writers Frank Robbins and Dennis O'Neil, artist Neal Adams, and editor Julius Schwartz. Batman—rechristened "the" Batman as in days of old—now preferred the shadows to the limelight of television, displacing his spirited Boy Wonder in the process.

In *Batman* #217 (December 1969), Grayson, who by this point had matured to his late teens, moved from his home in Gotham City and entered Hudson University. As Robin the "Teen" Wonder, the hero floundered through the 1970s in irregular guest appearances and backup stories. Designed as a cheerful counterpoint to Batman's darkness, Robin without Batman didn't seem to work (notwithstanding some lighthearted solo stories in the more innocent times of earlier decades). He grew introverted, struggled to cultivate his own identity, and became estranged from Batman in the process. In October 1980, Robin was included as the leader of the revamped New Teen Titans (a group he'd been shunted into in its previous incarnation), and under the watch of writer Marv Wolfman and artist George Pérez, he began to emerge as a character in his own right.

When Jason Todd was introduced as the new and younger Robin in the 1983 Batman titles, Wolfman and Pérez took it upon themselves to reinvent the original Boy Wonder. Grayson, they discovered, was a cipher, with little individuality outside of Robin's.

So they appropriated the basic components of his heroic guise—his acrobatic flair and detective skills—and made the Teen Wonder a natural leader. As the Titans' tactician, Grayson was now a man, and it was time for him to be Robin no more. In *Tales of the Teen Titans* #39 (February 1984), he permanently retired his crimson tunic, and became the ebon-clad, blue-feathered Nightwing, five issues later.

Nightwing led the Titans through myriad escapades, falling in love with and almost marrying teammate, Starfire, along the way. In the lengthy "Knightfall" serial that ran through the Batman comics beginning in late 1992, the rift between Nightwing and Batman intensified when the Dark Knight, after being crippled by the villainous Bane, selected someone other than Grayson to succeed him. Nightwing felt that he should have been chosen to inherit the "mantle of the Bat" and deeply resented his mentor. Nightwing and Batman ultimately came to grips with the reasons behind their emotional separation, and Wayne embraced Grayson as his son, even asking him to temporarily adopt the Batman guise in the "Prodigal" storyline (1994–1995).


A BOLD NEW ERA FOR
NIGHTWING
DC
41

Nightwing #41 © 2000 DC Comics. (Cover art by Greg Land and Drew Geraci.)

Through these appearances, Nightwing had become a fan favorite, and readers clamored for the character to headline his own title. DC Comics hesitated, stayed by the stigma of Grayson's longtime sidekick status, but tested his wings in 1995 first with a one-shot, then with a four-issue miniseries. Critical and commercial reaction to both was strong, and in October 1996, Dick Grayson—one of comics' most recognizable characters—was at last awarded his own ongoing title with the release of *Nightwing* #1. The hero patrolled the streets of Blüdhaven, a woefully corrupt city near Gotham, in a dual capacity: Armed with glove gauntlets (replacing the utility belt he wore as Robin), night-vision lenses, martial arts mastery, and unbreakable "Escrima sticks" in his guise of Nightwing; and with a badge as Blüdhaven police officer Richard Grayson. During the summer of 2003, he rejoined several of his former Titans teammates as the leader of the all-new Outsiders.

Despite the labors of talented DC Comics writers and artists, Dick Grayson remains Robin in the minds of the public at large. Actor Chris O'Donnell portrayed a twenty-something Grayson/Robin in the movies *Batman Forever* (1995) and *Batman & Robin* (1997), interestingly, the former film includes the character mentioning "Nightwing" as a possible heroic name. In the late 1990s, Grayson finally broke free of the bonds of pop-culture restraints and appeared on television as Nightwing in the animated *New Batman/Superman Adventures.*

After Batman was seemingly killed in 2009, Grayson accepted his destiny and assumed the role of Batman, with Bruce Wayne's alleged son, Damian, acting as his Robin. When the original Batman turned up alive in 2011, he had Grayson continue to operate as Batman in Gotham City, while he organized "Batman Incorporated" around the world. In September 2011, DC launched a new *Nightwing* series in which Grayson once more appears in that costumed persona.

Actually, DC's first Nightwing was Superman himself! The sinister Brainiac had captured the Kryptonian city of Kandor (before the planet exploded) by shrinking it and keeping it within a bottle. Superman rescued the Bottle City of Kandor and kept it in his Fortress. Starting in 1963, Superman and Jimmy Olsen would adopt the identities of Nightwing and Flamebird to act as costumed crime fighters in Kandor, in imitation of Batman and Robin. The most recent Kryptonian version of Nightwing is Chris Kent, co-created in 2006 by Geoff Johns and Richard Donner, the director of the classic 1978 *Superman* movie (and named after its late star, Christopher Reeve). The son of Phantom Zone villains General Zod and Ursa, Chris was raised briefly by Clark Kent and his wife Lois Lane. *—ME & PS*

Nova

In many ways, *Nova* signaled the end of an era. The comic was an avowed attempt to recapture the innocence and excitement of the early days of the all-conquering 1960s *Spider-Man* comic. In the 1970s, the tide of comics was turning, however, and Spider-Man was swept away in the wave of X-Men mania; although he was fondly enough remembered to make several spirited comebacks. Nova was dreamed up in the 1960s by would-be comics pro Marv Wolfman, who was finally able to make his dream a reality when he became editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics. The *Nova* comic's first issue, in 1976, introduced readers to underachieving high-school zero Richard Rider, who stumbles across a dying alien (shades of Green Lantern's origin) by the name of Rhomann Dey, from the planet Xandar, who presents him with a golden helmet. In the time-honored tradition, the helmet gives the startled teen fantastic abilities, including amazing strength and the power of flight. In the guise of Nova the Human Rocket he can do the impossible.

The comic's high school milieu would have been familiar to any longtime Spider-Man fan, but at least Rider had a reasonably functional family—as much a rarity in comics then as now. With solid artwork from veterans such as Sal Buscema and Carmine Infantino, the title was always attractive, and a bizarre mix of villains usually guaranteed the reader a good time. In addition to arch-foe the Sphinx, Nova also tussled with bargain-basement bozos such as Diamondhead, the Condor, Powerhouse, Mega Man, and the Corruptor. *Nova*'s twenty-five-issue run ended with our hero, along with fellow crime-fighters the Comet and Crime Buster (Team Nova, anyone?), in pitched battle with the Sphinx and assorted hoods, en route to Xandar.

The storyline was concluded in a few issues of *The Fantastic Four* (issues #208–#212), in which Nova and pals defended Xandar from a Skrull invasion, cosmic anti-hero Galactus battled it out with the Sphinx, and Nova was awarded the title of Xandar's Protector. After a while in space, Rider felt homesick and was allowed to return, but at the expense of his powers—or so he (and readers) thought. After a decade in the wilderness, forgotten by his readers and now a depressed high school dropout, he resurfaced in the *New Warriors*, in 1990, courtesy of the team's co-creator Tom

DeFalco and series writer Fabian Nicieza. Nova rediscovered his powers in the most dramatic way possible—by being dropped from a tall building (by team leader Night Thrasher) and finding, as he hurtled to the ground, that his former powers kicked in, much to everyone's relief. The New Warriors team, made up of sidekicks and rejects, proved to be one of the hits of the 1990s, renewing interest in Nova and inspiring a second stab at solo success in 1994.

Through a mistaken newspaper report in the team's early days, Nova became widely known as Kid Nova, much to his chagrin and his teammates' merriment—an incident typical of the *New Warriors*' humorous undercurrent. Sadly, after the exuberance of the comic's first few years, darker elements began to encroach on the fun and, in the last issues of his own (second) comic (issue #18 in 1995), Nova lost his powers (again). He had failed to answer a call to arms from the long-forgotten planet Xandar, and so an evil character, called Nova Omega, stripped the hero's abilities. Rider eventually recovered his powers two years later, in the last issue of *New Warriors*, only to endure another period in the comics wilderness before Image founder Erik Larsen gave him one last try.

The Larsen-scripted *Nova, The Human Rocket* (1999), began with the New Warriors disbanding and then set about returning Nova to his roots, complete with revived villains the Sphinx, Diamondhead, and others. Now, more than twenty years after his first appearance, Rider had finally become a college student, and much as before, the comic was a mélange of misfit angst, rollicking adventure, and a zeitgeist-defying optimism. It lasted seven issues.

In the twenty-first century Nova was not present when some of his New Warriors comrades were killed in an explosion, and he later briefly joined the Secret Avengers. A new *Nova* series started in 2007, written by the team of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, who also wrote the 2010 limited series *The Thanos Imperative,* in which Nova plays a major role. Nova apparently sacrifices his life to defeat Thanos in the latter series, but such deaths in the Marvel universe rarely prove to be real or permanent. —*DAR & PS*

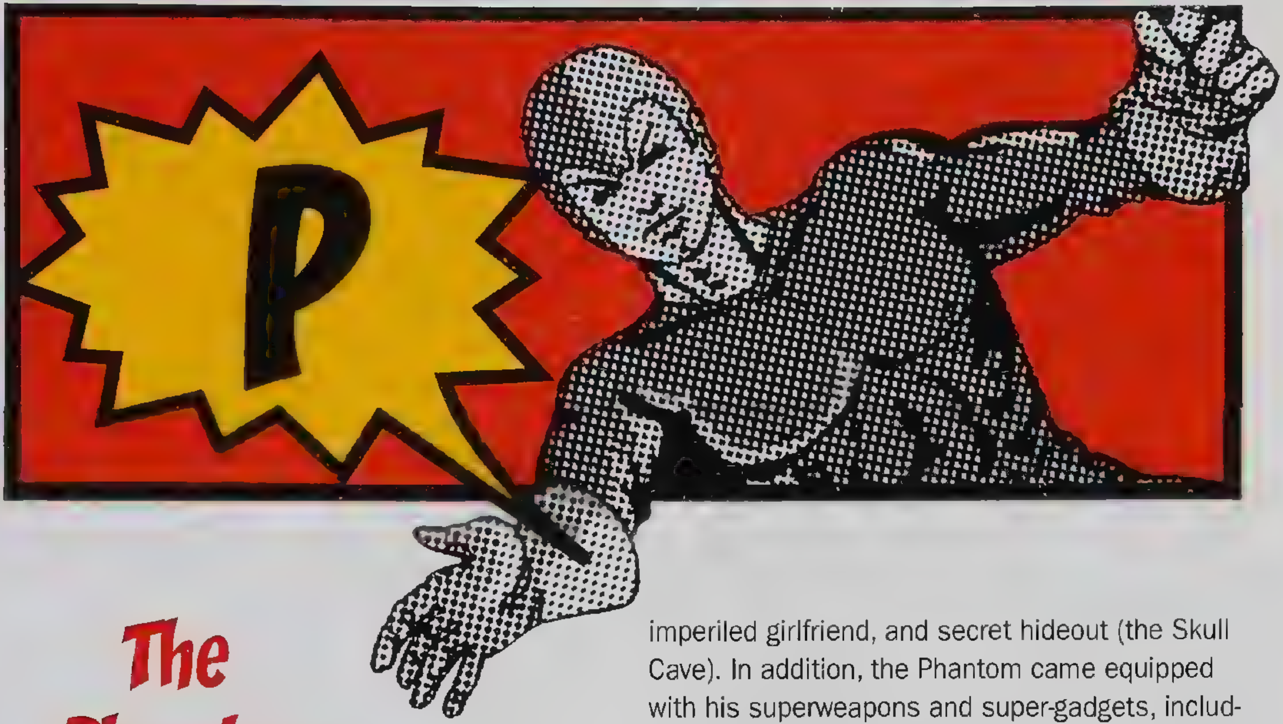
The Outsiders

DC Comics spent the 1970s reinventing Batman, returning him to his 1939 roots as a brooding "creature of the night," and distancing him from the campy persona made famous by actor Adam West in the television series *Batman* (1966–1968). By the early 1980s, the Caped Crusader had become the Darknight Detective, his grim demeanor making Batman an outsider among his Justice League of America (JLA) teammates. When the JLA refuses to intervene in an international crisis involving the kidnapping of an associate of philanthropist Bruce Wayne (alter ego of Batman), Batman does the unthinkable: He quits the JLA! "I've had *enough* of your two-bit Justice League!" he snarls on the cover of *Batman and the Outsiders* #1 (1983), as he chooses sides with his "new partners." These Outsiders, a merging of heroes old and new, infiltrate the politically unstable European nation of Markovia to liberate Wayne's friend, in a covert mission orchestrated by tactician Batman, actions in direct defiance of the JLA and the U.S. State Department. And thus, these Outsiders are introduced as a fighting force willing to go beyond conventional means to exact justice. (Incidentally, DC had previously used the name "Outsiders" twice in the 1970s, for a group of bikers in Jack Kirby's *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen* run and for a grotesque superteam appearing only once in *First Issue Special.*)

Joining Batman were old-timers Metamorpho the Element Man, gruesome in appearance but comical at heart, a chemical combatant who had oozed in and out of comics limbo since his premiere in 1964; and Black Lightning, a street-smart African American hero (a DC rarity at the time) with electrical powers, who briefly headlined his own comic in 1977. Fleshing out the group were the indomitable Katana, a female samurai wielding a soul-absorbing sword; the spirited Halo, a teenage amnesiac, who was one of a race of energy beings called the Aurakles; and the regal Geo-Force, the Earth-manipulating brother of Terra from *The New Teen Titans.* Under the guidance of writer Mike W. Barr and artist Jim Aparo, *Batman and the Outsiders* promptly became one of DC's best-selling series, as the team tackled myriad menaces with amusing names like Baron Bedlam, the Force of July, and the Bad Samaritan. Barr's energetic scripting was rife with character development and subplots, and Aparo's (and later Alan Davis') artwork helped elevate *Batman and the Outsiders* to fan-favorite status. In 1985, the book split into two separate titles: the newsstand-distributed "softcover" *The Adventures of the Outsiders* series; and the direct-sales (sold exclusively to comics shops on a nonreturnable basis) "hardcover," *The Outsiders,* with Batman defecting and newcomer Looker joining the group. Two titles a month was too much of a good thing, and by February 1988 both were no more.

The Outsiders, minus Batman but with a handful of new recruits including Wildcat and the Atomic Knight, returned with little fanfare in 1994 for a two-year stint. In the summer of 2003, a new version of *Outsiders* premiered, a monthly comic written by Judd Winick (an original cast member on MTV's *The Real World*). This band of twenty-somethings specializing in "taking on threats no one else will" (according to DC's promotions) is fronted by Batman's former protégé Nightwing, and features a familiar blend of heroes new and established: Arsenal (once Speedy of the Teen Titans), Metamorpho, Black Lightning's daughter Thunder, the Golden Age Green Lantern's daughter Jade, a futuristic android called Indigo, and a superwoman named Grace. This series ended in 2007 and was succeeded by a new *Batman and the Outsiders* series, written by Chuck Dixon, in which Batman once again is leader of the team. Following Batman's disappearance in 2009, the series changed its title to *Outsiders,* with Geo-Force leading the team.

On his return, Batman organized a new team of Outsiders in *Batman Incorporated* (2011). Led by Red Robin (Tim Drake), it includes Freight Train, Halo, Katana, Looker, and Metamorpho. The Outsiders, including Black Lightning, Katana, Metamorpho—and in one instance, Geo-Force and Halo—have appeared on episodes of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* *—ME & PS*



The Phantom

Comics scholars generally agree that Superman was the first true superhero of the comic books, clearly marking the entrance of a new kind of hero into the marketplace. Though Superman wears an iconic costume, he was not the first heroic character to do so. That honor goes to the Phantom, a mystery-man hero type, who clearly ushered in the superhero genre. Written by Lee Falk (who earlier had success with the newspaper strip *Mandrake the Magician*) and drawn by Ray Moore, the Phantom first appeared in King Features Syndicate on February 17, 1936.

Readers first see the Phantom rising out of the sea to rescue beautiful Diana Palmer from peril, thus putting in motion events that will be repeated endlessly over the coming decades. With his purple bodysuit (though readers had to wait for a Sunday strip added in May 1939 to actually see the costume in color), striped trunks, hood, blank-eyed mask, and black leather gun belt bearing a "death's head" skull, the Phantom's costume defined his persona as a masked avenger. Preceding Superman by two years, it is here that the superhero blueprint was first fully established: a physically impressive, costumed character, complete with secret identity (Kit Walker), imperiled girlfriend, and secret hideout (the Skull Cave). In addition, the Phantom came equipped with his superweapons and super-gadgets, including two revolvers, homing pigeons he dispersed to send and receive messages, and a "skull" ring worn on his left hand, the imprint of which clearly meant that a person was struck by the hero.

The Phantom's origin lays hundreds of years in the past—the sixteenth century, in fact—when pirates raided a merchant ship, killing the crew and captain and leaving only the captain's young son alive. Washed up on a beach in an unspecified jungle setting, the child is befriended by a local tribe and swears an oath to "devote my life to the destruction of piracy, cruelty, and greed, and my sons will follow me!" Early versions of the origin name the child's father as Sir Christopher Standish, a British nobleman, but later versions name him as Kit Walker, and his descendants appear to think of themselves as American. The child thrives under the tutelage of the tribe and creates the Phantom costume, inspired by a native idol, to strike fear into the hearts of his enemies. Each generation of Walkers is trained to take over the mantle of the Phantom and, since all wear the same costume, local legend has it that he is in fact the same man 400 years later, hence the nickname, "the Ghost Who Walks."

Over the years, the Phantom accumulated a wide cast of characters, including Guran, leader of the tribe; trusted friend Bandar; foster son

Rex; trusted wolf Devil; and horse Hero. After dating love interest Palmer for decades, he married her in 1977 and she later gave birth to twins, Eloise and Kit (the latter destined to become the twenty-second Phantom). The supporting cast and constantly changing storyline have kept the strip fresh. The Phantom's adventures have taken him around the globe, and many episodes (particularly in the comic books) have related tales of earlier Phantoms, even including a nineteenth century lady Phantom.

Newspaper strip artist Phil Davis fell ill in 1942 and his assistant, Wilson McCoy, gradually took over the strip, working completely solo from 1947 to 1961. His successor, comic book veteran Seymour "Sy" Barry, then produced the feature for an extraordinary thirty-two years, before his assistant, George Oleson, finally took up the reins in 1994. If the work of Davis and McCoy now appears quaint, Barry's has consistently been attractive and polished, and it is his Phantom that invariably appears on merchandise to this day.

With any successful comic strip there is an inevitable flood of tie-ins and merchandise, and the Phantom has been no exception, appearing in, or on, everything from novels (twelve pulp-style paperbacks from Avon published in the early 1970s and co-authored by Falk), watches, and games to mugs, dolls, and rings. In 1943, he was brought to the silver screen by Columbia Pictures in a fifteen-chapter serial starring Tom Tyler (previously seen portraying Captain Marvel). A promised follow-up fell into licensing difficulties and was hastily rejigged into *The Adventures of Captain Africa,* starring John Hart. More successful was a 1996 Paramount movie (simply titled *The Phantom*), directed by Simon Wincer and starring Billy Zane and Catherine Zeta-Jones. Longtime fans praised the film for capturing the spirit of the strip.

If the Phantom's celluloid outings have been rare, his comic book life has been long and fruitful, starting in 1938, when the David McKay Company began reprinting his newspaper strip in Ace Comics, King Comics, and Feature Books. McKay printed Phantom strips throughout the 1940s, and then Harvey Comics took over the reins in the 1950s. In the 1960s, editor/writer Bill Harris and courtroom artist Bill Lignante produced new Phantom comic books for the first time, for Gold Key from 1962 to 1966, and for King Features (the syndicating company, thereby getting into the comics business for themselves) from 1966 to 1967. Charlton took over the franchise for the next eight years, initially producing a very handsome-looking *Phantom* comic, by the future Aquaman team of Steve Skeates and Jim Aparo. Charlton's run met with mixed opinions, not least from King Features, but it ended on a high in 1977, after a beautiful sequence of issues from artist Don Newton.

There was then a decade in the wilderness for the Phantom before DC Comics tried its hand at a title or two in 1988, and since then various companies (including Marvel, Wolf, Moonstone, Manuscript Press, and Tony Raiola) have kept the Ghost Who Walks in the public eye. Two of Marvel's short-lived attempts were based on slightly eccentric Saturday morning cartoons: the 1986 *Defenders of the Earth,* which co-starred King's other main heroic properties, Mandrake the Magician, Flash Gordon, and Prince Valiant; and the 1994 futuristic *Phantom 2040,* starring the twenty-fourth Phantom.

The Phantom is far from being a solely American phenomenon. The character has achieved enormous success across the world and has been enjoyed in more than sixty countries. Foreign Phantom comics first appeared in Italy in 1938, in fact preceding their American equivalent, but it is in Scandinavia and Australia that he has been most successful. The jungle hero has been a national institution in Sweden since World War II, and Stockholm even has its own Phantom theme park. While the 1970s and 1980s saw a decline in U.S. comic books featuring the masked avenger, Sweden's Semic Press was producing two new stories a month for the Scandinavian market, mostly drawn by Spanish artists. These Semic strips have tended to explore the Phantom's earlier incarnations, including the fifth Phantom (who fought Blackbeard), the thirteenth Phantom (who fought in the 1812 war), and the sixteenth Phantom (who was apparently a cowboy!).

If the Phantom is popular in Scandinavia, then he is a genuine obsession in Australia, dominating the comic book scene there just as Superman, Spiderman, and the X-Men have in the

United States. Since 1948, the Frew Company has been publishing a combination of newspaper strips and European reprints, in a variety of formats, every couple of weeks. As of 2004, Frew has produced more than 1,300 editions of its *Phantom* comic and it is still going strong. If the American comic book is no longer a significant presence on U.S. newsstands, the newspaper strip itself is still in fine health, appearing in more than 500 papers across the country.

Moonstone Books began publishing new *Phantom* graphic novels in 2002, and launched a *Phantom* comics series in 2003, which was relaunched in 2009 as the series *The Phantom: Ghost Who Walks*. Then Moonstone Books published the twenty-one-issue series *Phantom: Generations*, each issue of which featured a different Phantom from over the centuries. Dynamite Entertainment took over the comic book rights to the Phantom and launched the series *The Last Phantom* in 2010, with covers painted by Alex Ross.

The Phantom's forays into the media have included movie serials, television shows, and the live-action 1996 film *The Phantom,* starring the body-sculpted Billy Zane ably filling the purple tights. A new television miniseries, *The Phantom,* starring Ryan Carnes in the title role, premiered in Canada on the Movie Network in 2009, and in the United States on the Syfy cable channel in 2010. Through television and the comics, the Phantom legend has now carried on into a brand new century. *—DAR, PS & GM*

Phantom Stranger

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, comics were peppered with all kinds of mysterious storytellers, masked, cloaked, or hatted—narrators such as the Mysterious Traveler, the Man in Black Called Fate, Mister Mystery, Dr. Drew, and DC Comics' Phantom Stranger. The DC series ran for only six issues, from 1952 to 1953, each issue presenting several short mystery tales starring the trench-coat-and-hat wearing Stranger. In fact, "starring" is probably too strong a word, since the Stranger had the disconcerting habit of popping up out of nowhere (and only "where I am needed") and apprehending evildoers in the nick of time. His creators never made it clear who he was or where he came from, his tell-all quote being, "I do not foresee the future, I merely act upon it."

In the late 1960s, following the successful relaunch of the Spectre and the burgeoning popularity of its horror comics, DC decided, in 1969, to revive the Phantom Stranger in *Showcase* #80. By the summer, the hero was starring in his own comic. Those early tales mostly featured him materializing on street corners wherever groups of young children were gathered to tell them scary stories, occasionally starring himself. He was joined in this somewhat dubious pursuit by Dr. 13 who, like the Stranger himself, had enjoyed a brief outing in the early 1950s (when he was known as the Ghost Breaker). Dr. 13's sole purpose in life appeared to be to disprove "evidence" of the supernatural, and for the next few years he doggedly trailed the Stranger's every move. In a way, their relationship was something of a forerunner of the *X-files*, with Dr. 13 resembling the doubting Scully and the Phantom Stranger as a precursor to Mulder.

Until the fourth issue, the Phantom Stranger had defeated his enemies with his fists and wits, but that issue pitted him against an enchantress called Tala, Queen of Darkness, and rather conveniently, he suddenly became incredibly powerful—with attributes including the ability to create heat, to cause temporary blindness, and to talk to animals. Tala regularly popped up for the next couple of years, developing something of a crush on the Stranger—in between trying to destroy him, of course, as did another evil witch called Tanarok. As the strip became more popular, its star appeared in a couple of Batman strips and was also inducted into the Justice League of America. From that point on, whenever DC's writers put their characters into particularly tricky situations, they could always summon up the Phantom Stranger to get them out of trouble.

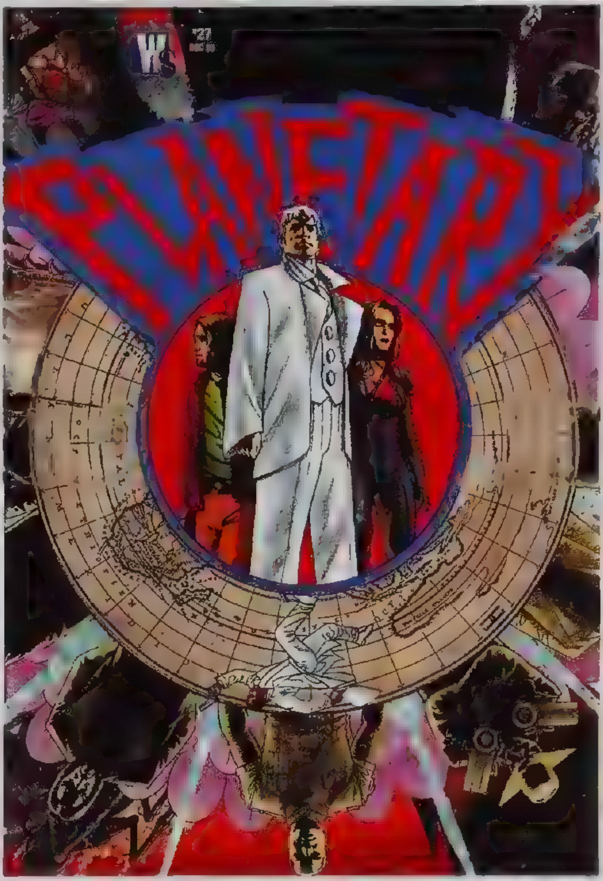
Much of the comic's success was due to its writer, Len Wein, and artist Jim Aparo. Together, they took the Stranger around the world, to other dimensions and, finally, to an all-out battle with Tala, which saw her trying to summon up the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. However, when the creative team's popularity promoted them to other comics, the Stranger gradually declined as he returned to his 1950s roots as a bystander in his own stories. Some late adventures with Deadman were not enough to stave off cancellation in 1976, but further guest slots with Batman, Superman, and Deadman kept him in the public eye. A 1980s backup slot in a new *Swamp Thing* comic led to appearances in the main strip and finally an issue of *Secret Origins*, which set out to explain where he came from—a mere twenty-five years after his first series.

For a character that had "lived" this long without an origin story, management decided that just one tale would not do him justice, and so DC served up four potential explanations. In the first, the Phantom Stranger turned out to be the Wandering Jew who betrayed Jesus, and who had been condemned to walk the earth for eternity. In another version, he was the sole survivor of Sodom and Gomorrah, given powers by an angel, while in a third variant, he was an angel himself, cast out of heaven. In the fourth take, he absorbs power from the end of the universe, and tracks back in time to the beginning—or something like that. Then again, of course, the Stranger's true origin might well be none of the above!

In the 1990s, he was reduced for the most part to being a bit player in other characters' comics, with one final, valuable role to play. In the *Books of Magic* miniseries, the Stranger was one of four DC heroes chosen to oversee the emergence of a new, powerful sorcerer, who would control all the magic in the world. This was the young, spikey-haired, bespectacled boy wizard, Tim Hunter, whose similarity to the somewhat better-known (and later developed) Harry Potter is striking.

The Phantom Stranger appears in "Chill of the Night," a standout episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. He is voiced by Kevin Conroy, the voice of Batman himself in previous animated films and TV series. —*DAR*

Planetary



Planetary #27 © 2009 DC Comics. (Cover art by John Cassaday).

Planetary is a team of superhumans who regard themselves as "Three people who walk the world in search of strangeness and wonder, uncovering things others wish were left covered. They are the mystery archeologists, explorers of the planet's secret history, charting the unseen borders of a fantastic world." Their motto is "keeping the world strange": they seek to find the fantastic beings and elements of the world and to preserve them from obscurity or destruction.

Planetary's mission reflects the purpose that British writer Warren Ellis had in co-creating the series. He has stated that *Planetary* is "about the superhero subgenre, and its antecedents," and that, "I wanted to do something that actually went deeper into the subgenre, exposed its roots and showed its branches." Hence, the members of Planetary encounter not only counterparts of familiar figures from the superhero genre, but also characters who are analogues to classic figures from pulp fiction adventures and other genres.

The three members of the Planetary team are Elijah Snow, Jakita Wagner, and a young man known as the Drummer. Elijah Snow has the power to create intense cold. He is one of the "Century Babies," superhumans who are immortal (if not killed by external means) and who were born at midnight on January 1, 1900. Other "Century Babies" include Jenny Sparks of the Author ity; Axel "Doc" Brass, Planetary's counterpart of Doc Savage; Lord Blackstock, Planetary's analogue of Tarzan; and Bret Leather, a vigilante inspired by the Green Hornet, the Shadow, and the Spider. In the early twentieth century, Snow was taught by the elderly Sherlock Holmes.

Jakita Wagner is the daughter of Lord Blackstock, and possesses superhuman strength and speed, and high resistance to injury. Although born in the 1930s, she is still physically young. The Drummer has a superhuman mental ability to communicate with and manipulate computers, and indeed to "read" any source of information, whether it is technological, or a person's DNA code, or even magic.

The principal villains of *Planetary* are the Four, a team of superhumans who are clearly modeled on Marvel's Fantastic Four. In 1961, the Four made a bargain with "posthumans" from an alternate Earth. In exchange for gaining superpowers, The Four agreed to prepare their own Earth for conquest by the posthumans in 2011. Hence, the Four withheld knowledge of technological advances from Earth's people and even killed other superhumans. The members of the Four included their leader, scientist Randall Dowling (based on Mr. Fantastic), who can "stretch" his mind to control the minds of others; Kim Suskind (based on the Invisible Woman); William Leather (based on the Human Torch); and Jacob Greene, who became a monster like the Thing.

Other *Planetary* characters who are inspired by classic figures from the superhero and other genres include: David Paine, a scientist who transformed into a Hulk-like monster; John Leather, alias the Dead Ranger (based on the Lone Ranger); John Stone (based on Nick Fury); Anna Hark (based on Fu Manchu's daughter Fah Lo Suee); and Jack Carter (based on *Hellblazer*'s John Constantine).

In *Planetary/Batman: Night on Earth* (2003), Planetary encountered various alternate versions of Batman, even one based on the 1966 television series. *Planetary/JLA: Terra Occulta* (2002) depicted a parallel Earth, on which the members of Planetary were evil, and were opposed by alternate versions of members of the Justice League, including Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman.

Created by Ellis and American artist John Cassaday, *Planetary* first appeared in a preview story that was published in *Gen 13* #33 and *C 23* #6 (both September 1998). The series moved into its own comic book with *Planetary* #1 (April 1999) and was meant to appear bimonthly. However, since Ellis fell ill and Cassaday was busy with other work, *Planetary* instead suspended publication in 2001, for two years, then resumed, and finally concluded with issue #27, in 2009. *Planetary* was published by WildStorm, an imprint of DC Comics, and was set in the WildStorm universe; hence, there was a crossover with another WildStorm superhero team, the Authority, in the special *Planetary/The Authority: Ruling the World* (August 2000). —*PS*

Plastic Man

Plastic Man was one of the real stars of the Quality Comics lineup of superheroes in comics' Golden Age (1938–1954), thanks to the madcap genius of his creator, Jack Cole. Cole had led a colorful life, including cycling across America at the age of eighteen, before moving to New York in 1935 and dedicating himselft to his true passion of cartooning. After a fitful start as a gag cartoonist, he found himself in at the beginning of the nascent comics explosion, working for Centaur Publishing and Lev Gleason Publications before being head-hunted by Quality Comics owner, Everett "Busy" Arnold. In mid-1941, Arnold asked Cole to create a new hero for Quality's upcoming new *Police Comics* title—something in the tradition of Will Eisner's Spirit. But Cole responded with his own sort of super-detective, a hero who always got his man in his own way: Plastic Man.

In August 1941, the first issue of *Police Comics* introduced an unsuspecting public to a disreputable hoodlum called Eel O'Brian, hard at work cracking a safe at the Crawford Chemical

Works. Disturbed by a guard, O'Brian and his gang flee the building, but a stray bullet hits a large chemical vat, showering the thief with acid. Injured and desperate, O'Brian runs for miles before reaching a mountain retreat called Rest-Haven, where he is tended to by kind monks who shield him from the police. Inspired by their trust in him, he decides to turn over a new leaf and vows to change his ways. Only then does he discover that the acid has affected his body in such a way that he can now stretch it into any shape he can think of. Thrilled by that discovery ("Great guns!! I'm strechin' like a rubber-band!"), he dons a red bodysuit, trimmed with a yellow belt, and topped off with wraparound sunglasses, and begins his new life's work as a crime fighter.

Under Cole's infinitely creative direction, Plastic Man soon developed into one of the wittiest, most inventive superheroes on the stands. Originally Cole wanted to call his hero the India Rubber Man, but was persuaded by Arnold to take advantage of the consumer's new fixation with plastic, which advertisers had just termed the "miracle material," and which was quickly making its way into dozens of new household products. Plastic Man—or Plas, as his friends referred to him—could stretch himself into any shape or size. He could roll himself into a ball, roll off a skyscraper, and bounce right back up off the street below. He could make himself into a giant sail and fly through the air, and he was so pliable that bullets just bounced right off him. He could disguise himself as a chair, a boat, a lasso, a bag full of money, a blimp, a net—in fact, anything that Cole's fertile mind could dream up. Plas could also change his features to imperson ate anyone, from a beautiful woman to Adolf Hitler himself. But while he was seemingly invulnerable enough to withstand being flattened by a steamroller, he was badly affected by intense heat (which caused him to melt) and cold (which stiffened him like a board).

Traditional superheroics—the battle between good and evil—were hardly the strip's principal concerns. Rather, Cole used Plastic Man's adventures as excuses to showcase his zany brand of humor. As an artist he had an outwardly simple style but was able to animate his characters with a manic zeal, and each panel was crammed with weird characters, slapstick gags, or Plastic Man's increasingly bizarre contortions. Even today, when many of the strips from this era appear quaint or crude, Cole's Plastic Man seems fresh, vibrant, and hilarious.

Feeling the need for a sidekick for his "stretchable sleuth," Cole introduced the polka-dot-shirted, rotund Woozy Winks, in *Police Comics* #13 (November 1942), and the strip rose to even greater heights of lunacy. Having rescued a drowning swami, Woozy was rewarded with the gift of invulnerability to become "the man who cannot be harmed," and he decided to use his great gift for evil by turning to crime. When Plas tried to stop him, the great crime fighter was attacked by lightning, giant hailstones, and instantly sprouting trees, but he finally defeated the indolent thief by making him feel guilty: "Think of your mother—what would she say if she knew about your crime career?" The newly contrite, if barely repentant, Woozy instantly became Plas' ever-present crime-busting companion and comic foil, a bumbling, always ravenous, leering, cynical layabout, who naturally stole the hearts of his devoted readers.

Plastic Man soon became the cover star of *Police Comics* and starred in the title for 102 issues, only being ousted when the title was revamped into a true-crime comic in 1950. Plas was also given his own comic in 1943, and this flourished until Arnold sold the whole company to DC Comics thirteen years later. The in-demand Cole was co-opted into helping out on *The Spirit* newspaper feature when that series' creator, Will Eisner, was drafted, which meant that he soon needed help of his own to keep up production of his beloved *Plastic Man*. By all accounts, Cole was heartbroken that he could not handle all the work on his own, but various Quality staffers, including Gwenn Hansen and Bill Woolfolk on scripts, and artists Al Bryant, Gill Fox, and Charles Nicholas, all pitched in.

Cole was at his peak after World War II. His kinetic style was now more fluid than ever and each page overflowed with sight-gags and increasingly bizarre characters. Plastic Man (who was by now an FBI agent) never developed a regular cast of bad guys but Cole delighted in inventing ever more eccentric and bizarre wrongdoers for his hero to dispatch. Among many peculiar fellows, Cole created Bladdo the Super Hypnotist, the Sinister Six, Amorpho, Abba and Dabba, and Wriggles Enright—in fact, each story could boast someone memorable. But as successful and creative as his work on the strip was, Cole always craved more and had been moonlighting as a gag cartoonist for years, finally leaving the strip in 1954. Freed from his comics workload, Cole soon found fame and wealth as the leading cartoonist in the newly launched *Playboy* magazine, and a few years later began work on the newspaper strip *Baby and Me*. Tragically, the intense and complex Cole killed himself at the height of his success, in 1958, for reasons that have never been clear, thus robbing comics of one of its true giants.

In 1956, while DC was keen to keep publishing such newly purchased Quality titles as *Blackhawk* and *GI Combat,* they inexplicably chose to ignore Plastic Man, and the character was soon forgotten by the company. Indeed, it was not until a decade later, when DC was approached by an agency wanting to use the hero in a magazine advertisement, that anyone in the company realized that it owned the character at all. After a tryout in the "Dial 'H' for Hero" strip, DC revived Plas for a new series in 1966, but without Cole's inspiration the comic was a disastrous mélange of tired TV parodies and camp superheroics. A decade later, in 1976, DC tried again, with art by the Cole acolyte Ramona Fradon, and produced a very attractive series that, nevertheless, never quite realized the heights of the strip's golden years. This was followed by a 1980 run in *Adventure Comics,* with art by Joe Staton, which was probably the truest to Cole's original vision of any of the revivals and was prompted by the unexpected arrival of a Plastic Man TV series (titled *The Plastic Man Comedy-Adventure Show,* which ran on ABC in 1979–1980, for a total of thirty-two episodes).

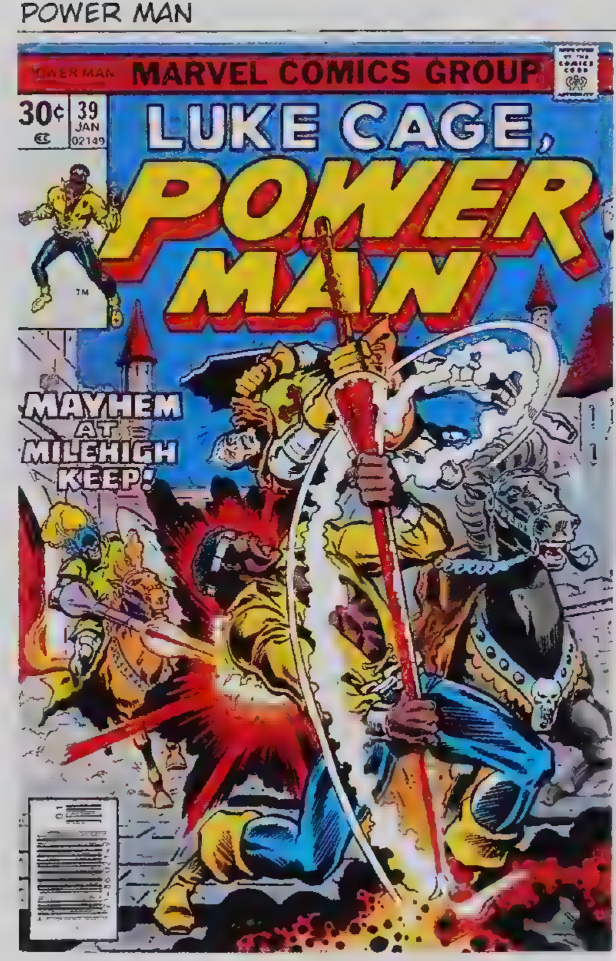
These ill-fated attempts illustrate a pattern in which DC would resurrect Plastic Man each decade (for example, in 1988 and 1999) for a well-crafted miniseries or one-shot, which singularly failed to find an audience. DC's most recent attempt at a series, in late 2003, involved the left-field talents of the inventive Kyle Baker and might yet prove to be successful. Over the years, however, the company has met with greater success when it has used the hero as a bit-player in its superhero universe, teaming him with Batman numerous times in titles such as *The Brave and the Bold,* or inducting him into the Justice League of America. In fact, in a 2002 JLA storyline, it was revealed that Plastic Man had a long-lost son!

In addition to the well-received series by Baker, DC has tried to keep the character in the public eye with occasional reprints of the strip's glory years, culminating in a series of hardbacked "archives," collecting Plastic Man strips from his very first appearance onward. Another late-breaking development was the publication, in 2001, of the trade paperback *Jack Cole and Plastic Man: Forms Stretched to Their Limits,* by Art Spiegelman and Chip Kidd. Though the hero may not regain the level of popularity and acclaim he enjoyed in the 1940s, the revival of interest in Cole and his flexible hero was a long overdue and welcome acknowledgment.

Recently, Plastic Man was reunited with his son, oddly named Offspring, who has stretching powers of his own. The original version of Offspring existed in an alternate reality and debuted in the 1999 miniseries *The Kingdom.* Plastic Man appears in numerous episodes of the animated television series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* in which he is voiced by Tom Kenny, best known as the voice of SpongeBob SquarePants. —*DAR*

Power Man

Not to be confused with Erik Josten, a super-strong Caucasian Marvel Comics villain who stormed into the pages of *The Avengers* in the mid-1960s, the African American superhero known as Power Man (Luke Cage) represents a breakthrough in racial diversity from Marvel's first great period of publishing expansion in the early 1970s. While Power Man wasn't Marvel's first African American superhero—that honor goes to T'Challa, the Black Panther, who was introduced in 1966 (*Fantastic Four* #52)—he blazed other,



Power Man #39 © 1977 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Bob Brown and Jim Mooney.)

arguably even more significant pop-cultural trails: (1) Luke Cage is the very first black superhero to star in a regular series bearing his name (beginning in *Luke Cage: Hero for Hire* #1, 1972); (2) his crime-fighting name does not contain the adjective "black" (à la Black Lightning, Black Goliath, and the Black Panther); and (3) he is Marvel's first mercenary superhero.

Conceived by writer Archie Goodwin and penciler George Tuska, Power Man starts life as a streetwise Harlem native known only as "Lucas," a character whose derivation from the protagonists of contemporary "blaxploitation" films, such as *Shaft* (1971), represents a real innovation for the superhero genre. Framed for the crime of heroin trafficking by a former friend named Willis Stryker, Lucas finds himself incarcerated in the Seagate maximum security prison, where his self-righteous belligerence provokes the ire of Albert Rackham, a racist prison guard. Lucas' sole ally is Dr. Noah Bernstein, who believes the prisoner's claims of innocence and arranges for him to receive parole, in exchange for Lucas' participation in a hazardous chemical experiment intended to catalyze human cell regeneration and to counteract old age and disease. Hoping to kill Lucas, Rackham interferes with Bernstein's experiment when it reaches a critical juncture, and the resulting chemical accident leaves Lucas with superhuman muscle and bone mass, incredible strength, and steel-hard skin. Lucas' principal weakness is his hot temper.

Unaccustomed to his new abilities, Lucas lashes out at Rackham, leaving him apparently dead (thus enabling Rackham to return later as a vengeful bad guy). Now believing himself to be a murderer, Lucas escapes from Seagate, smashing through its walls with his fists. Although the authorities think Lucas has died during his breakout attempt, he makes it to New York City, where he intends to confront Stryker. Unfortunately, Lucas also has no means of support and lives in fear of being recognized and recaptured. But after a restaurateur gives him a cash reward for thwarting a robbery, Lucas finds his niche: engaging in heroics in exchange for money. He also adopts the name "Luke Cage" (an amalgam of his real first name and his recent state of confinement) and a costume that prominently features an open-chested, yellow polyester shirt and a belt made of heavy chain (also a symbol of incarceration). Cage goes on to get revenge on Stryker, who was also responsible for the death of his girlfriend, Reva, and begins confiding in Dr. Bernstein, who now runs a New York City free clinic (*Luke Cage: Hero for Hire* #2, 1972). Soon, Cage is actually scraping out a marginal living via commercial superheroics (*Luke Cage: Hero for Hire* #3, 1972), though he is generally, as likely as not, to right wrongs in the world purely out of conscience, whether remunerated or not.

During the first four issues of *Luke Cage: Hero for Hire,* Goodwin did the lion's share of the writing, with assists from Roy Thomas. Tuska and a young African American artist named Billy Graham provided most of the art (Graham was one of the few blacks then working in the comics industry), and writer Steve Englehart penned most of the next dozen issues. Len Wein (co-creator of the 1970s X-Men revival) took over the writing chores with issue #17 (1974), by which time the series was retitled *Power Man,* reflecting Cage's attempt to make his enterprise more marketable by emphasizing his professional moniker. In fact, Cage is forced to fight the aforementioned villainous Power Man (Erik Josten) over the right to use the name (*Power Man* #21, 1974). After a brief stint as a member of the Defenders, in 1975, Cage temporarily replaces the Thing as a member of the Fantastic Four the next year. During the 1970s, the hero's exploits caught the attention of an enthusiastic young comics reader named Nicolas Coppola, who years later achieved movie stardom using a Power Man–inspired stage name: Nicolas Cage.

As "blaxploitation" films receded over the cultural horizon along with the kung fu craze, in *Power Man* #48 (1977) Marvel sought to salvage its investment in both genres by introducing Power Man to Iron Fist (Daniel Rand), a martial arts hero whose own series had recently been canceled. Under the creative guidance of the future *X-Men* team of Chris Claremont (writer) and John Byrne (artist), Power Man's two-fisted directness and Iron Fist's disciplined rationality proved to be a good mix. The pair go into business together under the name of "Heroes for Hire, Inc." and the book's title was changed yet again (*Power Man and Iron Fist* #49, 1978). Writer James C. Owsley has called *Power Man and Iron Fist* the best "buddy book" Marvel Comics ever produced, describing it as "a dysfunctional version of DC Comics' venerable *World's Finest* series [which teamed Superman and Batman]. It was [a] fairly standard opposites attract dynamic: the hardened cynic and the philosopher from [mystical city] K'un-L'un. The humor was largely based on Luke's reaction to Danny, and the inexplicable bond that grew between the two men."

The reconstituted series prospered under writers such Bob Layton, Mary Jo Duffy, Steven Grant, Chris Claremont, Mike W. Barr, Dennis O'Neil, Kurt Busiek, Archie Goodwin, Alan Rowlands, James C. Owsley, and Tony Isabella, and such artists as Kerry Gammill, Greg LaRocque, Denys Cowan, Keith Pollard, Ernie Chan, Geoff Isherwood, Richard Howell, Steve Geiger, and Mark D. Bright. As the stories unfolded, various writers allowed Cage to evolve, letting his slangy, stereotypical ethnic speech become more realistic. "Issue #123 had a fabulous panel," said writer Owsley (an African American), "something I can't believe I got away with, where Luke reveals [that] his 'Loud Angry Negro' routine was just a put-on. It is difficult, by and large, for white America to understand [that] the tribal slang that is stereotypical of black America is an affectation and not a handicap. We can turn it on and off. One minute, we're Don Blake, the next, we're Thor. Luke can, absolutely, turn his slang on and off."

Power Man and Iron Fist ended in 1986 (though still selling well, it was canceled to make room for Marvel's New Universe titles), along with the life of Iron Fist, who dies at the hands of a character named (absurdly) Captain Hero. Cage is blamed for Iron Fist's death (*Power Man and Iron Fist* #125) and lives as a fugitive until his name is formally cleared several years later. A true example of comics publishing synergy, Power Man and Iron Fist lasted longer together than either of them had as solo heroes anchoring series of their own.

After more than half a decade as an occasional guest star in other titles, Power Man earned another series, simply titled *Cage* (1992). Despite Marvel's efforts to make the book relevant in the age of Rodney King, the series lasted only until issue #20 (1993). Though weary of superheroics-for-profit, Power Man reluctantly allows himself to be talked into rejoining the mercenary-hero business he had started in the early 1970s; the new monthly *Heroes for Hire* series (1997) not only brings Cage together with such fellow super-entrepreneurs as the Hulk, Hercules (who is now no longer an immortal), Ant Man (Scott Lang), the Black Knight (Dane Whitman), and the White Tiger (another martial arts hero), it also resurrects the late Iron Fist, bringing him into the group. Because Power Man has spent years on the run, falsely blamed for Iron Fist's death, he harbors some resentment toward his old partner, and the two have to work at patching up their relationship. Unfortunately, the new supersquad failed to click with readers, getting the ax in 1999 after nineteen issues.

A more successful latter-day update of Luke Cage came in 2002, from writer Brian Azzarello, legendary artist Richard Corben (best known for his colorful and expressive work in *Heavy Metal* during the 1970s), and painter Jose Villarrubia. Part of Marvel's adult-oriented MAX line, this series (also titled Cage) dispenses with the character's 1970s canary-yellow "superpimp" shirt in favor of gray vests, black stocking caps, and sunglasses—a look that is far more consonant with modern inner-city, hip-hop, and gangsta rap sensibilities. The series' R-rated language, though far rougher than anything the industry's self-cen soring Comics Code Authority would approve even today, is likewise far more realistic and authentic in comparison with earlier Power Man tales. This had not been Cage's first appearance in the MAX line; a similarly believable (if somewhat less gruff) version had guest starred as the iffy love interest of Jessica Jones, the former superheroine turned private eye in writer Brian Bendis's series *Alias* (no relation to the TV series starring Jennifer Garner). After both Cage's own MAX miniseries and *Alias* ended their runs, Cage and Jones moved over to *The Pulse!* (2004–present), in which they are revealed to be expectant parents! Shortly after the birth of their daughter Danielle (named after Danny Rand), Luke and Jessica got married.

By this time Cage had joined the Avengers. During Marvel's "Civil War," in opposition to the Superhuman Registration Act, Cage joined Captain America's original Secret Avengers. Following the seeming death of Steve Rogers, the Captain America, Cage became leader of the underground team called the New Avengers. After Rogers returned, he appointed Cage to head the Thunderbolts, and later persuaded him to join the reorganized Avengers as well.

Later, Cage and Iron Fist met a new young superhero, Victor Alvarez, who had assumed the name of Power Man. Iron Fist became the new Power Man's mentor and crime fighting partner. Though much "grittier" than any of his predecessors, today's Luke Cage makes it clear that this character is more than capable of transcending the times that spawned him and the unique circumstances of his creation. —*MAM & PS*

Power Pack

During the early 1980s, mainstream superhero comics such as Frank Miller's *Daredevil* were becoming increasingly "gritty" and "hard-boiled," a trend of escalating violence that would reach its apotheosis with such series as *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (also by Miller, 1986) and *The Punisher* (1986). But *Power Pack,* created in 1984 by Marvel Comics writer-editor Louise Simonson (an alumnus of such Warren horror magazines as *Creepy* and *Vampirella*), and artist June Brigman (also known for her work on *Supergirl* for DC Comics and the syndicated *Brenda Starr* newspaper strip), followed a decidedly different trajectory.

Power Pack is the tale of a quartet of siblings, four young children who receive superhuman abilities from a benevolent, horse-like alien named Aelfyre Whitemane, who with his sentient spaceship seeks to thwart the invading reptilian Snarks. Alex, Jack, Julie, and Katie Power are the children of Margaret Power and Dr. James Power, who had invented a technological device that the Snarks sought to possess. To prevent this, Whitemane gives twelve-year-old Alex the power to make objects lighter or heavier (hence his superhero name "Gee," as in gravity); bestows superspeed upon ten-year-old Julie ("Lightspeed"); confers upon eight-year-old Jack the ability to expand and contract his body's molecules, thus enabling him to alter his body's density at will (and justifying his nickname "Mass Master"); and empowers five-year-old Katie with the ability to unleash powerful energy blasts from her hands (she calls herself "Energizer," thanks to the inspiration of a well-known television commercial). As the oldest of the siblings, Alex becomes the group's natural leader, carefully looking out for the younger kids (especially the emotionally volatile Katie, to whom Julie often refers affectionately as "Katie-bear").

Although many enthusiasts of the era's traditional superhero fare (primarily adolescent males) disdained *Power Pack,* younger readers, and those who were themselves the parents of small children, found the series enchanting. Simonson's scripts blended fairy tales with science fiction and children's books (the evil alien Snarks, for example, were straight out of Louis Carroll), juxtaposing the backdrop of outer space with the real-world setting of New York City, and presented relatively realistic characterizations of children and their sibling relationships. Brigman's art had a gentle, expressive, and whimsical quality that brought Simonson's words and imagery to vivid life. The reason for the distinctiveness of Brigman's illustrations may have been her relative unfamiliarity with the comics medium prior to working on *Power Pack;* being largely unacquainted with the conventions and clichés of the superhero genre, she wasn't enslaved by them. While *Power Pack*'s unusual content may have put the series at a competitive disadvantage in terms of sales, it provided seven years of highly original comic book storytelling. *Power Pack* evidently found its unorthodox audience right away; though originally conceived as a miniseries, Marvel quickly decided that the concept was strong enough to sustain an open-ended monthly series.

During the first half of *Power Pack*'s run, the kids' adventures don't involve their parents, who were at first entirely ignorant of their children's superheroic double lives. The group eventually expands to encompass a nonfamily member, four-year-old Franklin Richards, the son of the Fantastic Four's Mr. Fantastic and Invisible Woman. Franklin, who becomes an honorary team member, adopts the supermoniker "Tattletale" because of his ability to see events from five minutes in the future, thus "telling on" bad guys before the fact (he also frequently quarrels with the headstrong Katie). The Powers also have a number of adventures with Kofi, the son of Whitemane, the source of the group's powers. During these adventures, the team is frequently at odds with their father's former boss, who becomes a supervillain whose name is calculated to strike fear into the hearts of children: Bogeyman. In addition, they frequently face big-league villains, such as the fearsome mutant known as Sabertooth. The series took part in such world-threatening multi-series crossovers as *Secret Wars II* (1986), *The Fall of the Mutants* (1988), *Inferno* (1988), and *Acts of Vengeance* (1990).

Over the years the series also played host to numerous high-profile Marvel guest stars, such as Spider-Man, Cloak and Dagger, the X-Men, Wolverine, the New Mutants, the Fantastic Four, the Avengers, the Punisher, and even the all-but-omnipotent eater of entire planets, Galactus. On one occasion, Marvel used the *Power Pack* characters in a special public service–oriented giveaway comic dealing with child sexual abuse (*Spider-Man/Power Pack,* 1984).

After Simonson's departure from the series with *Power Pack* #40 in 1988, numerous other writers took custody of the Power kids, including Steve Heyer, Jon Bogdanove, Judith Kurzer Bogdanove, Julianna Jones, Terry Austin, Dwayne McDuffie, and Michael Higgins, and the art chores passed from Brigman to Mary Wilshire, Brent Anderson, Scott Williams, Bob McLeod, Terry Shoemaker, Sal Velluto, Whilce Portacio, Ernie Colón, Jon Bogdanove, Tom Morgan, and Steve Buccellato. While *Power Pack* was being published, a TV pilot based on the property was produced, intended to launch a Saturday morning cartoon series on NBC during the 1991–1992 season. Unfortunately, the show died on the drawing board, just as the comics series—its audience weary of so many creative-team changes—was gasping its last.

During the run of the series, the superabilities of the Power children were swapped around among the four siblings on more than one occasion. The first time this occurs (*Power Pack* #25, 1986), Alex receives Katie's "zap" power, prompting him to change his name to "Destroyer"; after getting Jack's density powers, Julie changes her nickname to "Molecula"; Alex's original gravity-control powers go to Jack, who becomes "Counterweight"; and Julie's superspeed jumps to Katie, who is subsequently known as "Starstreak." The Powers' powers received yet another random reshuffle three years later (*Power Pack* #52, 1989), only to be restored to their original owners in *Power Pack Holiday Special* #1 (1992), the oversized magazine-format comic in which the series concluded (the regular monthly title had ended in 1991 after a sixty-two-issue run).

But permanent obscurity wasn't in the cards for the Power family, lest Marvel risked losing its trademarks on the characters. Under the name "Powerhouse," a slightly older Alex Power joined the 1990s motley misfit superteam known as the New Warriors (*The New Warriors* vol. 1 #64, 1995). In this incarnation, Alex bears the powers of all four Power Pack members. The rest of the Power siblings recovered their abilities a few years later, however, when the original Power Pack team reassembled in a four-issue miniseries (*Power Pack* vol. 2, 2000), written by Shon C. Bury and penciled by Colleen Doran (whose beautifully rendered science fiction comic, *A Distant Soil*, made her an ideal *Power Pack* illustrator).

In the new millennium, Alex joined Reed Richards' Future Foundation, and Julie joined Excelsior, a support group for teenage former superheroes. Starting in 2005, Marvel has published series of *Power Pack* comics that present an alternate version of the characters, aimed at younger readers. Except for the first miniseries, these comics have been released under the Marvel Adventures imprint. —*MAM & PS*

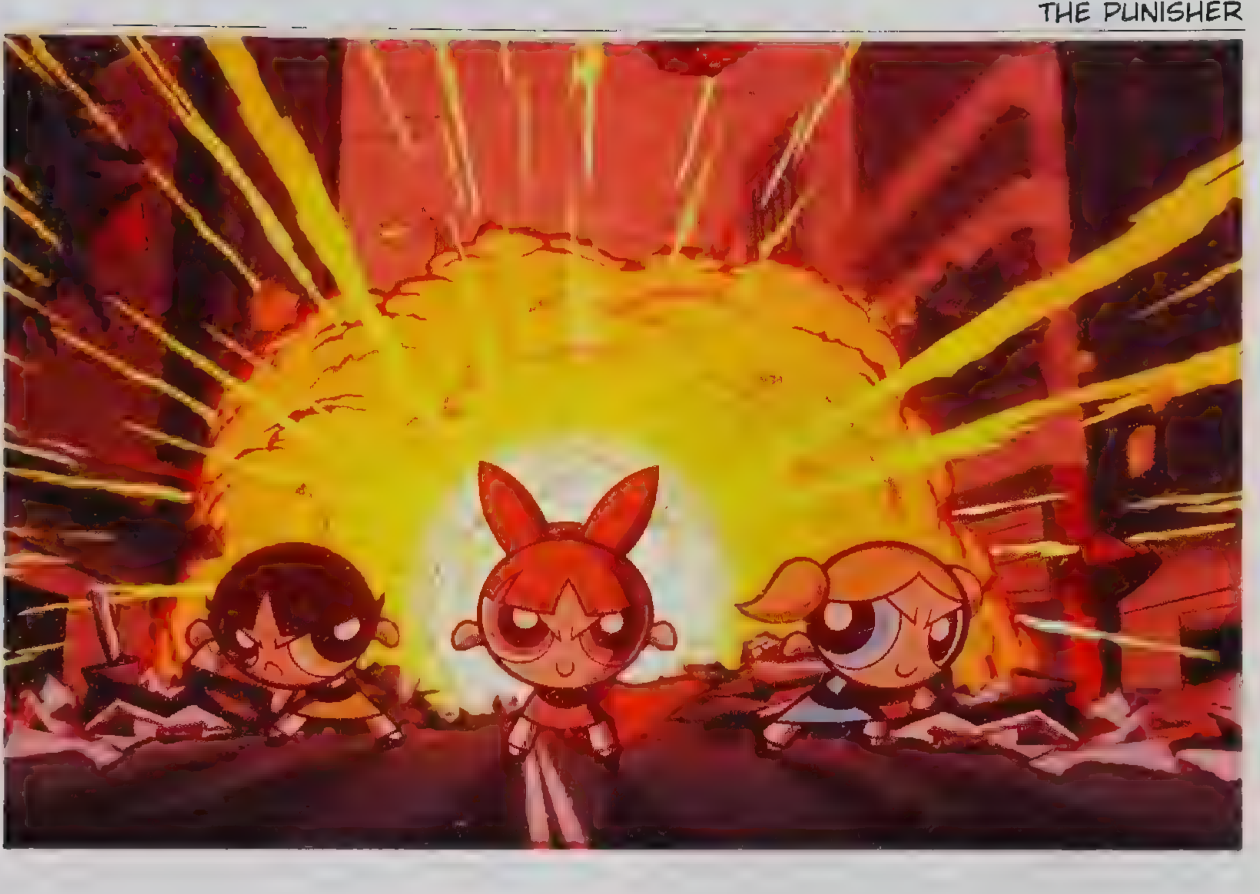
The Powerpuff Girls

Imagine a fairytale gone awry: When Professor Utonium accidentally knocks over a vial of Chemical X, his superheroine trio, the Powerpuff Girls, is born. Originally designed to be a family of perfect sisters concocted, literally, from the ingredients "sugar, spice, and everything nice," instead these superpowered kindergartners kick butt, as they combat evil and advance the forces of good—all while mastering their ABCs. The team consists of Blossom (the leader of the group and brains of the operation), Bubbles (the overly sensitive and bubbly one who avoids sibling rivalry at all costs), and Buttercup (the tomboy of the group, always willing to fight first). Blossom's element is everything nice, Bubbles' element is sugar, and Buttercup's is spice. Since their core elements vary, so do their superpowers: Blossom has ice breath, Bubbles can speak to animals and has a Super Sonic Scream, and Buttercup can create a tornado and shoot laser beams from her hands. All three can fly.

As the girls' creator, father figure, and de facto mentor, Professor Utonium raises and trains the super-trio. Based in the city of Townsville, where the mayor is able to call the girls on his hotline whenever trouble arises, the girls attend kindergarten by morning and combat villains such as Mojo Jojo, Him, the Amoeba Boys, the Gang Green Gang, Roach Coach, Elmer Sglue, Seduca, and the Rowdyruff Boys by afternoon. They are also guided by their teacher, Ms. Keane, who educates them in kiddy curriculum and the benefits of peaceful resolution at Pokey Oaks Kindergarten.

One of Cartoon Network's original animated series, *The Powerpuff Girls* is the inspiration of animator Craig McCracken, who first conceived of the superheroine trio as a project for a college class at the California Arts Institution in 1992. Three years later Cartoon Network executives saw McCracken's concept and gave the girls their first pilot in 1995; a second pilot soon followed. By 1998, *The Powerpuff Girls* was a television series, raved about for its rich blend of action, engaging storytelling, and smart humor. Behind-the-scenes talent includes McCracken (who also serves as the show's executive producer), *Dexter's Laboratory* creator Genndy Tartakovsky (who often directs), and the voice talents of Catherine Cavadini (Blossom), Tara Strong (Bubbles), and Elizabeth Daily (Buttercup). Since landing their own gig, the Powerpuff Girls have fared well for themselves, drawing strong ratings, winning awards, and branding themselves on a wide array of girl merchandise, including clothing, lunchboxes, jewelry, dolls, and toys.

Catering to a grade-school-age girl demographic, *The Powerpuff Girls* is successful because it provides young girls with an example of dynamic female superheroines—girls just like them—who are empowered and empower*ing*. With unique abilities, minds of their own, and strong character traits—the antithesis of their names—these girls are forces to be reckoned with. In 2002, the super-trio segued from television to the silver screen with their own self-titled animated feature film. Although the show ended in 2005, the perky threesome appears occasion-



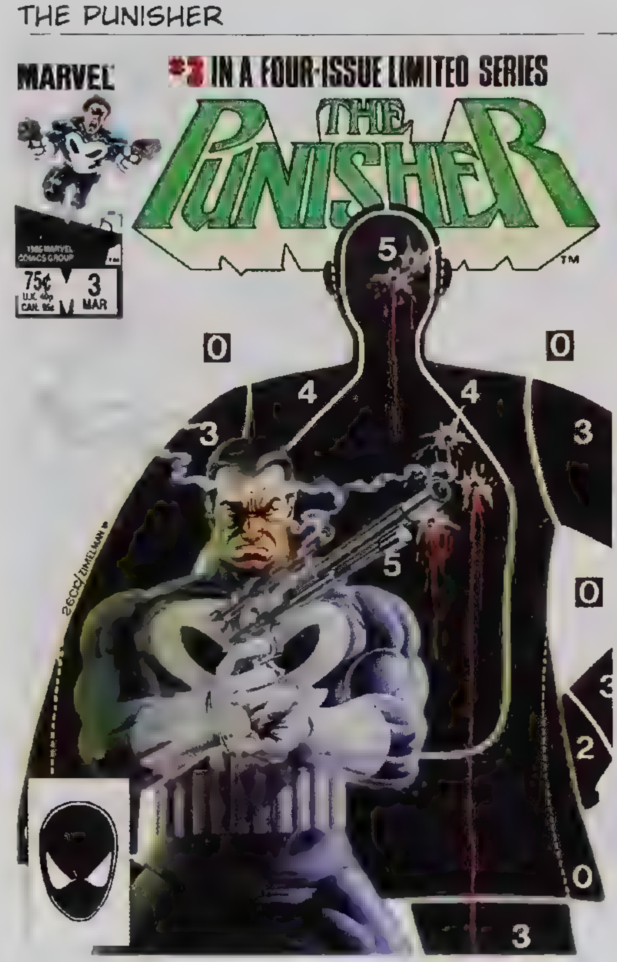
From 2002's *Powerpuff Girls: The Movie*. (Cartoon Network/Warner Bros. / The Kobal Collection.)

ally in the popular culture, most notably on T-shirts and in a 10th Anniversary special that aired in 2009. —*GM*

The Punisher

Anticipating such "grim and gritty" 1980s superhero fare as *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen* by more than a decade, Marvel Comics' Punisher is one of the medium's quintessential anti-heroes. Created by regular Spider-Man writer Gerry Conway and Marvel art director John Romita, Sr. (and unveiled in *Amazing Spider-Man* vol. 1 #129, 1974), the Punisher captures a 1970s vengeance-against-crime zeitgeist best exemplified in the larger culture by the gunplay-laden *Dirty Harry* films of Clint Eastwood, the *Death Wish* cinematic bloodbaths of Charles Bronson, and Don Pendleton's men's adventure paperback hero, *The Executioner*. Indeed, the original Punisher concept was for an *Executioner*-like hero, whom Conway dubbed the Assassin. Both editor-in-chief Stan Lee and the Comics Code Authority, however, vetoed that name as too amoral and violent. The newly renamed Punisher sported a distinctive, skull-emblazoned black costume (designed by Romita) that recalled the garb of the Black Terror, a Golden Age (1938–1954) hero from Standard Comics.

Though originally conceived as an adversary for Spider-Man, the Punisher is no mere garden-variety criminal; rather, he views himself as a crusader against all criminals, many of whom don't survive their encounters with him. Long before Frank Castiglione first takes up the formidable weaponry and body armor of the Punisher, he plans on entering the Catholic priesthood, only to abandon his clerical aspirations after learning that forgiveness is not his strong suit. Leaving his seminary studies behind, he falls in love with Maria Falconio, and the two are soon married and begin raising a family. Castiglione also enters the U.S. Marines, where (as Frank Castle) he receives training in land, sea, and airborne combat, and becomes proficient in underwater demolitions. Rising to the rank of captain while serving on various combat fronts, Castle earns the nick-



The Punisher #3 © 1985 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Mike Zeck and Phil Zimelman.)

name "Punisher" because of his tenacious pursuit of the enemy (*The 'Nam* #52–#53, 1991), eventually becoming a military training instructor.

While on leave, Castle takes his family on a picnic outing in New York's Central Park, where they inadvertently witness a gangland execution. The mobsters next gun down Maria and the Castle children, Frank Junior and Christie. But Castle himself survives, deserts the Marine Corps, and brings all of his considerable military expertise to bear in a one-man war against the underworld (the Punisher's oft-retold origin, which is very like that of the Executioner, who served as his template, first appears in *Marvel Preview* #2, 1975). Unlike the typical comic book crime fighter, the Punisher utilizes a varied arsenal of both lethal and nonlethal weapons, including an automatic M-16 rifle, pistols, concussion bombs, tear-gas grenades, and a fully armed and armored battle-van. Although Castle never hesitates to use lethal force against the criminals he stalks, he maintains a strict military code of honor that eschews the use of violence against innocent parties, including civilian police forces, which he allows to arrest and incarcerate him (briefly) without resistance. Despite his extralegal, overly violent methods, the Punisher regards himself as a protector of the helpless and the innocent.

Nevertheless, the Punisher's extreme worldview puts him on an ethical collision course with Spider-Man in their first encounter, back in the 1970s, during which the two stake out highly polarized positions in American society's eternal law-and-order debate. The wall-crawler sees the Punisher as a dangerous loose cannon who should not be allowed to roam the streets; Castle regards Spider-Man as a foolish idealist who lacks the strength and resolve to give criminals the harsh treatment they deserve. Spider-Man survives this initial clash largely because the Punisher does not entirely believe the bad press the *Daily Bugle* newspaper routinely gives the wall-crawler (editor J. Jonah Jameson sees Spider-Man in much the same way that Spidey does the Punisher). Probably because 1970s comics audiences (to say nothing of comic-book editors) were not yet ready for the Punisher's moral ambiguity, the character spent the next several years as a mere guest star, primarily in the *Amazing Spider-Man* comic.

But the Punisher was not destined to languish for long on Marvel's back bench, and arguably owes much of his far greater success in the 1980s to two influential men: Ronald Reagan, the embodiment of the nation's tough, rightward swing during this period; and Frank Miller, the innovative young writer-artist who began using the take-no-prisoners Castle as a foil for his gritty, film noir version of Daredevil (which he introduced in *Daredevil* vol. 1 #182–#184, in 1982). Miller's Punisher is still clearly a criminal, though treated sympathetically; his code of honor and his calculating nature receive more emphasis than do his violent, vengeance-inspired lawbreaking. But Miller makes no bones about the Punisher's goals. "The Punisher is an avenger," said the cartoonist. "He's Batman without the lies built in. They come from the same root. They're created by the same fears. The same kind of fear that I feel every time I ride the subway." Portrayals of the character by writers other than Miller varied widely during this period; for example, *Spectacular Spider-Man* #82 (1983) portrays a Punisher who is so maniacally obsessed with small legal infractions that he shoots at litterbugs and red-light runners (happily without hitting them).

As a (largely unfounded) fear of increasing street crime gripped the nation throughout the conservative Reagan era, comics audiences were increasingly receptive to the lethal vendetta of the Punisher, who finally landed his own five-issue miniseries in 1986 (cover-dated January–May). Marvel followed this successful effort with *The Punisher,* an ongoing monthly title debuting in July 1987. Such was the character's expanding success that November of the following year saw the introduction of *The Punisher War Journal* (a new monthly title); a third series, *The Punisher: War Zone,* began its run in March 1992. The Punisher also headlined a plethora of miniseries and graphic novels, some of which featured as guest stars such popular Marvel characters as the Black Widow and Wolverine. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a Punisher guest appearance in any sluggish-selling Marvel title all but guaranteed significant additional sales. The Punisher even graced the pages of two intercompany crossovers with DC Comics' Batman (*Punisher/Batman: Deadly Knights,* and *Batman/Punisher: Lake of Fire,* both in 1994)—and even turned up in a crossover with Archie of Riverdale High (*The Punisher Meets Archie* #1, August 1994)! The Punisher's vengeful legacy even survives into the far future with the monthly *Punisher 2099* series (its thirty four issue run began in February 1993), in which Public Eye Special Operations agent Jake Gallows wages war against criminals as an armored, high-tech vigilante.

During this period of intensive Punisher publishing, the character achieved increasing complexity, revealing more of his inner motivations. Not only does Frank Castle harbor a hatred for criminals of the sort that slew his family, he also hates being the Punisher—just as he despises himself for having failed to protect his family when it mattered most. But Marvel's overexposure of the character clearly took its toll as readers seemed to tire of Castle and his grim mission. July 1995 saw the end of all three of the main ongoing Punisher series. Still, the Punisher subsequently made a comeback as part of the highly successful *Marvel Knights* superteam series (vol. 1), which began in July 2000, and can also be seen in numerous miniseries, one-shots, and guest appearances since the turn of the millennium.

Garth Ennis wrote three new *Punisher* series, starting in 2000, 2001, and 2004, the last being under Marvel's new MAX imprint, which is aimed at mature readers. A new *Punisher War Journal* series, initially written by Matt Fraction, debuted in 2006.

The Punisher made it to the silver screen in 1989 (courtesy of New World Pictures) with Dolph Lundgren starring, fresh from the role of He-Man in *Masters of the Universe* (1987). The movie's quality and fidelity to the original were lax—the hero's skull-emblem was removed because the filmmakers deemed it "too comic-booky"—though it spawned a Marvel comic-book adaptation (*The Punisher Movie Special,* June 1990) and the premiere (in September 1989) of *The Punisher Magazine,* a large magazine-format monthly series that lasted only sixteen issues. The Punisher's cinematic future includes a second feature film (co-written by Punisher co-creator Gerry Conway) released in 2004, with Thomas Jane (of *Face/Off, Boogie Nights,* and *Dreamcatcher* fame) starring as the eponymous, artilleried avenger, proudly displaying the skull emblem across his chest. Produced jointly by Artisan Entertainment and Marvel, the film's teaser campaigns describe the Punisher as a former U.S. Marine and special agent turned vigilante, emphasizing his real-world superheroic skills, such as his finesse with explosives, large caliber guns, tactical weapons, and hand-to-hand combat. Another film, *Punisher War Zone,* followed in 2008, starring Ray Stevenson in the title role. —*MAM*

Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch

Longstanding Avengers members the Scarlet Witch and her twin brother Quicksilver have gone through as convoluted and protracted an origin as any characters in comics, and have endured many indignities in the process. Despite, or perhaps because of this, the Scarlet Witch is one of the longest-lived female supporting characters in the Marvel universe. The twins first appeared as members of Magneto's Brotherhood of Evil Mutants in *X-Men* #4 (in 1964), but were almost from the start reluctant villains. After a year of regular battles with the X-Men, their creators, writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby, evidently felt that the pair deserved a chance at the big time, and after a speedy renunciation of their criminal past, they were duly inducted into the Avengers (*Avengers* #16, 1965).

As Avengers, the twins were a cornerstone of the group's glory years through the 1960s and 1970s, while never quite building up enough of a following to encourage Marvel to launch them into solo careers. Initially, all that was known about them was that they were mutants. Wanda Maximoff, a.k.a. the Scarlet Witch, possessed a form of magic ("hex power"), while her brother Pietro, known as Quicksilver, was (as his name suggests) a super-speedster with a short-fused temper to match. Their first origin involved them fleeing persecution in their native Transia (one of Marvel's all-purpose Balkan backwaters) into the arms of Magneto, but there was much, much more to come.

In 1975, editors suggested (in *Giant-Size Avengers* #1) that Wanda and Pietro's parents were 1940s heroes the Whizzer and Miss America, who had given birth after a nuclear accident. Miss America died and the Whizzer fled in grief, leaving the twins to be brought up by a highly evolved cow (one of the *Island of Dr. Moreau*–like characters from Marvel's mythical complex called Wundagore). Some years later, however, this explanation was superseded by an even more startling revelation. This newer version (in *Avengers* #185) suggested that Miss America's twins had died, and that Wanda and Pietro were actually born to a gypsy named Magda, who had subsequently killed herself rather than reveal their whereabouts to their father Magnus, later known as … Magneto. The cow-lady midwife later gave the children to a gypsy family, the Maximoffs, who brought Wanda and Pietro up until they were killed by a mob, whereupon the twins were rescued by Magneto—which is where readers came into the storyline with *X-Men* #4.

The 1970s were a romantic decade for the twins, as the Scarlet Witch fell in love with her android teammate, the Vision, and Quicksilver fell for Crystal, of the Inhumans. Both couples married, and Quicksilver went off to live in the Inhumans' Himalayan refuge (and later on the moon), while his sister settled down to cozy domesticity in Leonia, New Jersey. (The Vision and the Witch starred in a couple of mid-1980s limited series, *Vision and Scarlet Witch,* one by writer Steve Englehart and artist Richard Howell.) But whereas Quicksilver gained a child, Luna, and was largely written out of the Avengers, Marvel writers had a different fate in store for the Scarlet Witch. During the company's *Secret Wars* series, the Vision was controlled by aliens, and a while later the couple left the Avengers for their West Coast branch. There Wanda became pregnant and gave birth to twins, William and Thomas; it later transpired that these were demon offshoots of the evil Mephisto. Then an increasingly unbalanced Vision was dismantled before being reconstructed without any emotion, and the couple tragically divorced; although the Vision's "half-brother" Wonder Man (on whose brain patterns the android's mind was based) unhelpfully declared his undying love for Wanda.

Things got even worse for Wanda in the 1980s, as she was reclaimed by Magneto, after becoming a bride of Set, and went over to the "dark side." Quicksilver returned to rescue her, but she was soon claimed by another Marvel baddie, Immortus, who had been influencing her actions for years. Confusingly, it seems that she was in fact not a garden-variety mutant but a nexus being—"someone who belongs to all realities." In later issues of *West Coast Avengers* she became the group's leader, a position she continued to hold in Force Works, a team of former West Coast Avengers (1994)—but there was more upheaval to come. In the "Onslaught" storyline, she died along with the other Avengers but was resurrected soon after. Wonder Man died, came back, died, came back as an energy being, and died again, still proffering his undying love, even though it was his robotic half-brother who was Wanda's most enduring paramour.

Wanda had an affair with Wonder Man, but then reunited with the Vision, who had regained his full range of emotions. Later, out of anguish over the loss of her children, Wanda underwent a nervous breakdown with dire results. Unleashing her chaos magic, she caused the (temporary) deaths of Hawkeye and the Vision. Subsequently, Quicksilver persuaded her to use her powers to reshape reality, transforming Earth into a planet ruled by Magneto, as shown in the series *House of M* (2005–2006). Thereafter, Wanda returned the world to normal, but deprived most of its mutants of their superhuman powers, herself included, it seems. Since then, Quicksilver has become a teacher in the new series *Avengers Academy.* Somehow, Wanda's children William and Thomas have become the members of the Young Avengers, and are known as Wiccan and Speed. —*DAR & PS*

Real-Life Superheroes

Most people claim that in real life nobody would dress up in a costume to fight crime and do good deeds. But they are wrong. In examples of life imitating art, hundreds of people, in countries around the world, have donned costumes to become real-life superheroes. Some of them are indeed crime fighters, while others perform less dangerous kinds of good deeds, such as serving the homeless or other members of their community. Many have secret identities.

This Real Life Superhero movement, which began in earnest at the end of the twentieth century, has been covered by major media organizations, including ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, NPR, *Rolling Stone*, and *The Washington Post*. Director Michael Barnett and producer Theodore James made *Superheroes*, a documentary about real-life costumed crusaders, which premiered in 2010 at the Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. Websites, such as Real Life Superheroes.org., Superheroes Anonymous.com, and World Superhero Registry.com, keep track of real-life superheroes' whereabouts.

As in the comics, New York City has many superheroes, such as the members of the New York Initiative, including BattleStar, Blindside, Dark Guardian, Dead End, Hex, the Samaritan, Shade, Short Cut, Skinner, Snipe, Thre3, Titan, TSAF, Zero, and Zimmer. Other New York-based superheroes include Life, the superheroine Nyx, and Phantom Zero.

Washington D. C. has DC's Guardian, Captain Prospect, Justice, and Metro Woman. The Great Lakes Alliance includes Celtic Viking, Geist, Razorhawk, and the Watchman. Salt Lake City has a local superhero team called the Black Monday Society, including Ghost, Ha!, Insignis, Oni, and Silver Dragon. San Diego, home to the annual Comic-Con, is also home to Mr. Xtreme. Seattle has the Rain City Superhero Movement, including Buster Doe, Catastrophe, Gemini, Green Reaper, No Name, Penelope, Phoenix Jones, Thorn, Thunder 88, and Troop. Citizen Prime is in Arizona, the Crimefighter Corps (Captain Jackson, Crimefighter Girl, Queen of Hearts) was active in Michigan, Master Legend operates in Florida, the Crimson Fist guards Atlanta, and Zetaman is based in Portland, Oregon.

Among the United Kingdom's superheroes are Black Arrow, a female crime fighter and environmental activist, and Angle Grinder Man, who frees cars that were clamped by the police. Another costumed environmental activist, Captain Ozone, is based in Ireland. Superbarrio champions the rights of workers and the poor in Mexico City. Thanatos, who aids the homeless, and Polar Man are based in Canada. Entomo the Insect

Man is a costumed crime fighter who operates in Naples, Italy. Red Arrow, devoted to public service, is based in Hong Kong.

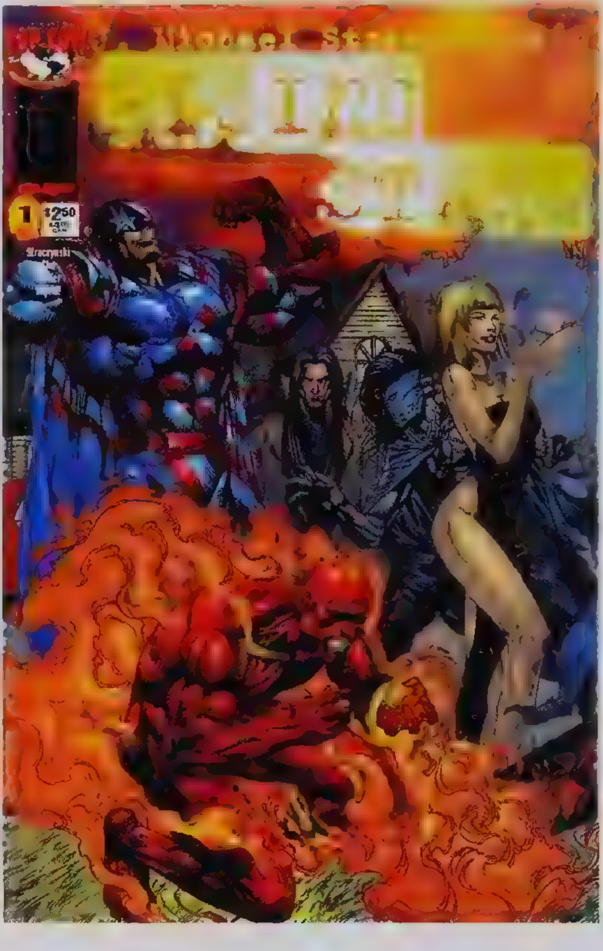
In part as a reaction to this trend, Stan Lee, co-creator of many classic Marvel superheroes, and Bruce Nash co-created the reality television series *Who Wants to Be a Superhero?,* which ran for two seasons on the Sci-Fi Channel (now known as Syfy). The first season premiered on July 27, 2006, and the second season started on July 26, 2007. In each season a group of contestants, each of whom had created a superhero persona for him- or herself, underwent a series of challenges administered by Lee to judge their worthiness to be superheroes. In each episode, Lee dismissed one or more contestants for faring poorly in the tests or otherwise not living up to the moral standards of a superhero. In the final episode of each season, a winner was chosen, and he or she got to star in his or her own comic book, published by Dark Horse, and to appear in a made-for-TV movie on the Sci-Fi Channel. The winner in the 2006 season was Feedback (Matthew Atherton), and the victor in the 2007 season was the Defuser (Jarrett Crippen).

In an example of art imitating life, the comic book *Kick-Ass* and 2010 film of the same name tell the story of ordinary teenager Dave Lizewski (Aaron Johnson) who sets out to become a real-life superhero. Dave meets Big Daddy (Nicolas Cage), a former cop who, in his quest to bring down a drug lord, has trained his eleven-year-old daughter to be the ruthless vigilante Hit-Girl (Chloë Grace Moretz).

Despite, or perhaps because of, these media depictions of real-life superheroes, there is no shortage of real-life superheroes in major cities across America, including emulators who don traditional hero garb, such as Alain "Spider-Man" Robert, known for committing the illegal act of climbing skyscrapers, while wearing a Spider-Man costume. —*PS & GM*

Rising Stars

The night skies above the small town of Pederson, Illinois, are illuminated by a bright flash of extraterrestrial light in 1969, and the lives of 113 soon-to-be-born individuals are changed forever. The children born after "the flash" (as the event came to be known) are genetically enhanced, each bearing superpowers. The government monitors the "Specials," quarantining them at Camp Sunshine for observation, treatment, and training. After a counselor is killed by one of the children, the government tries to keep the lot of them in custody, but the parents sue. When the case reaches the Supreme Court, a compromise is set: Dr. William Welles will both aid and supervise the children, and if any are determined to be dangerous, they will be taken into custody.


Rising Stars #1 © 1999 J. Michael Straczynski and Top Cow Productions. (Cover art by Keu Cha, Jason Gorder, and Liquid!)

Years later, most of the Specials are adults. Some have become celebrities, while others are virtual unknowns. Some are superpowered protectors of the law, while others are criminals. Those who leave Pederson are tracked by the government. But when low-powered Specials begin showing up dead, it appears a serial killer is stalking the Specials. John Simon, the hero known as the Poet, is dispatched to find the murderer, but stopping the crimes may not be so easy—especially when it is revealed that every time a Special dies, the others gain something. And by 2032, only one Special remains, and he has a story to tell …

Rising Stars is one of a number of critically acclaimed series—including *Watchmen, Powers, Astro City, Marvels,* and a handful of others—which examine how superheroes might affect the real world, and how real people would react to superpowered beings living among them. Although there are 113 Specials, the series mainly focuses on about two dozen of them. These include Matthew Bright, a tough police officer with strength and flight powers; Elizabeth Chandra, a superstrong model, who appears to everyone as the ideal woman; Laurel Darkhaven, a telekinetic assassin with a specialty of killing terrorists; Randy Fisk, a.k.a. Darkshadow, a street vigilante with flight, strength, tracking powers, and a computer-equipped Shadowcave; Lee Jackson, a pyrokinetic with a deadly secret in his past; Joshua Kane, a.k.a. Sanctuary, a hermaphroditic televangelist, who hides his true, female form from everyone; Stephanie Maas, a.k.a. Critical Maas, a woman with multiple personalities and the ability to mind-control other Specials; Jason Miller, a.k.a. Patriot (and Flagg), a strong, masked superhero working as a corporate spokesperson; and John Simon, a.k.a. the Poet, the withdrawn narrator of the *Rising Stars* story and the most powerful of all the Specials.

A twenty-four-issue maxi-series, *Rising Stars* is the creation of writer J. Michael Straczynski (also creator of the popular TV series *Babylon 5*). Wanting total creative freedom and ownership of his properties, Straczynski brought *Rising Stars* to Top Cow, an imprint of Image Comics. The first issue appeared in August 1999. Additionally, a *Bright* miniseries saw print in 2003, followed by two more miniseries in 2005 and 2006, and a pair of *Rising Stars* novels were published in 2002, written by Arthur Byron Cover. A series of action figures was released by Palisades in 2001. Straczynski also wrote the feature film script for *Rising Stars: Born in Fire* in late 2000, adapting the first story arc for an MGM and Atlas Entertainment movie. After the script was drastically revised by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, tensions flared between Straczynski and Top Cow, and the film deal fizzled. Still, the comic book series stands as a critical and fan favorite, and a landmark in the synergy between comics and other media (with Straczynski's crossover from the world of TV mirroring that of screenwriter/director Kevin Smith from the world of film to comics), like Marvel's *Daredevil* and DC's *Green Arrow.* Clearly, Straczynski caught the comics bug—literally—going on to write Marvel's prestigious *Spider-Man*, the somewhat *Rising Stars*–like hit *Supreme Power,* also for Marvel, and DC's Wonder Woman. —*AM*

Robin

Imagine swooping from the rooftops and rushing into peril alongside a dark-cloaked crusader, crushing criminals while having the time of your life. Such is the appeal of Robin the Boy Wonder, Batman's death-defying junior partner, who epitomizes the designation "sidekick" more so than any other comic book superhero. Touted as "the sensational character find of 1940" in his inaugural appearance in *Detective Comics* #38, Robin, premiering a scant eleven months after the debut of his cowled mentor, was envisioned by Batman creator Bob Kane as a hero with whom juvenile readers could identify. Kane's hunch was correct: the Boy Wonder's introduction not only instantly elevated the already-popular Batman's sales, it also spawned a legion of imitators, including the Shield's Dusty, Captain America's Bucky, and Green Arrow's Speedy.

Robin the Boy Wonder was actually Dick Grayson, the youngest of a family of circus aerialists, who witnessed his mother and father plunge to their deaths from a sabotaged trapeze. This murder was also observed by millionaire Bruce (Batman) Wayne, who as a child had similarly watched his own parents die. Batman took this vengeful youngster under his wing, training him as his partner. And thus the most famous of superhero teams—Batman and Robin, the Dynamic Duo—was born. But while both Wayne and Grayson's childhoods were shattered after seeing the executions of their parents, the heroes' parallels ended there. Batman was brooding and grim, demonically clad in shadowy hues. But Robin was buoyant and robust, ostentatiously outfitted in a red tunic; green shorts, boots, and gloves; and a yellow cape. With gymnastic flash and the crimefighting arsenal in his utility belt, the Boy Wonder laughed in the faces of his foes, punning while pummeling. Before long, the line dividing the Dynamic Duo's styles began to blur, with Batman's attitude becoming more jovial and Robin learning detective skills from his teacher.

Robin accompanied Batman on a host of 1940s and 1950s escapades in *Detective, Batman,* and *World's Finest Comics,* protecting their home of Gotham City against routine thugs and a growing contingent of colorful psychotics, including the Joker, Catwoman, and the Penguin. The characters' acclaim became so immense that their comic book adventures soon spawned a short lived newspaper strip, a guest sequence on the *Superman* radio program, and two movie serials, *Batman,* in 1943, and *Batman and Robin,* in 1949. Robin the Boy Wonder was even awarded his own series in *Star-Spangled Comics,* beginning in 1947 and continuing for several years thereafter.

During those innocent times, no one pondered the threat of child endangerment facing young Dick Grayson each time he leapt into action as Robin (although the theme would be addressed in 2000 in the flashback miniseries *Robin: Year One*). Real-life psychiatrist Frederic Wertham, however, perceived a different menace to the Boy Wonder and to the boys reading *Batman* and other comic books. In his 1954 indictment of the comics industry, *Seduction of the Innocent,* Dr. Wertham labeled the relationship between Batman and Robin as "homosexual," and the resulting backlash sparked U.S. Senate hearings that nearly put comics out of business. Batman and Robin limped along through the late 1950s and early 1960s, plagued by mundane, often ridiculous stories and by the inclusion of the "Batman Family" (Batwoman, Ace the Bat-Hound, Bat-Mite, and the original Bat-Girl, the latter of whom was Robin's sometime-girlfriend, devised to erase the notion of a gay partnership between the Boy Wonder and his adult companion). Sales dropped precipitously and the Batman titles teetered on the brink of cancellation.

In 1964, editor Julius Schwartz revitalized the Batman franchise with a movement called the "New Look." Robin was now clearly a teenager, and while still an enthusiastic juggernaut of justice, he began to come into his own, joining other powerful adolescents as the Teen Titans. In 1966, ABC-TV's wildly successful, campy *Batman* series made the Dynamic Duo pop icons and catapulted actor Burt Ward into instant stardom in his role of Robin. Ward's earnest portrayal of the Boy Wonder birthed a national catchphrase: "Holy [insert your favorite noun here], Batman!" Millions of boys wanted to be Robin, masquerading as the young hero for Halloween and playing with the plethora of Robin (and Batman) merchandise that permeated the mid-1960s retail market. And millions of girls went ga-ga over the groovy Boy Wonder—Ward was a teen idol, his masked visage gracing the covers of *16* and *Tiger Beat* fan magazines.

By late 1968, the television series sputtered and ran out of steam, while the comic books were returning Batman to his darker roots as a "creature of the night." Robin emerged from Batman's shadow: He became the "Teen Wonder" and Dick Grayson vacated the Wayne mansion and the Teen Titans for Hudson University. In the early 1970s, Robin appeared in a series of relevant (for the times) backup stories in *Batman* and *Detective,* fighting corporate fat cats and student unrest, instead of supervillains. After a decade of sporadic appearances, Robin the Teen Wonder fronted a new incarnation of the Teen Titans that launched in 1980, and fell in love with teammate Starfire. In February 1984, Dick Grayson permanently shed his red tunic, ultimately adopting a new superhero guise as Nightwing. Despite these changes in the comics, television and movies preserved Grayson in the role of Robin: Via a variety of Batman animated programs from the late 1960s through the early 1990s; in the long-running *Super Friends* TV series; and twice on the big screen, with actor Chris O'Donnell playing

Grayson/Robin in director Joel Schumacher's *Batman Forever* (1995) and *Batman & Robin* (1997).

Even though Dick Grayson sported a new heroic name, the legend of Robin the Boy Wonder lived on, fueled by tradition and copyright protection. Succeeding Grayson as Robin, in 1983, was Jason Todd, a troubled teen who, after a largely unpopular stint as Batman's aide, was slaughtered by the Joker in a 1988 event stemming from a DC Comics–sponsored phone-in contest where readers decided the new Robin's fate. A new, female Robin, Carrie Kelly, appeared in writer/artist Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns,* in 1986, although this four-issue series occurred outside of the regular DC Comics continuity. In 1989, a tech-savvy teen named Tim Drake entered the life of Bruce Wayne—having cleverly inferred Batman's true identity—lobbying to become the new Boy Wonder. Reluctant to mentor another partner for fear of repeating Jason Todd's ghastly demise, Batman resisted, but eventually Drake adopted the Robin identity, albeit in a new, modernized uniform. The Drake version of Robin has, as of 2004, twice made the leap into animation: first in *The New Batman/Superman Adventures* (1997), then in the *Teen Titans* series airing on the Cartoon Network in 2003.

Since then, the history of Robin has been a series of surprises. Stephanie Brown, formerly a costumed heroine called the Spoiler, became the first female Robin in main DC continuity in *Robin* #126 (July 2004); she later assumed the role of Batgirl. Jason Todd was resurrected, adopted the Joker's original costumed guise of the Red Hood, and became a ruthless vigilante who clashed with Batman. This storyline was adapted into a direct-to-video animated film, *Batman: Under the Red Hood* (2010).

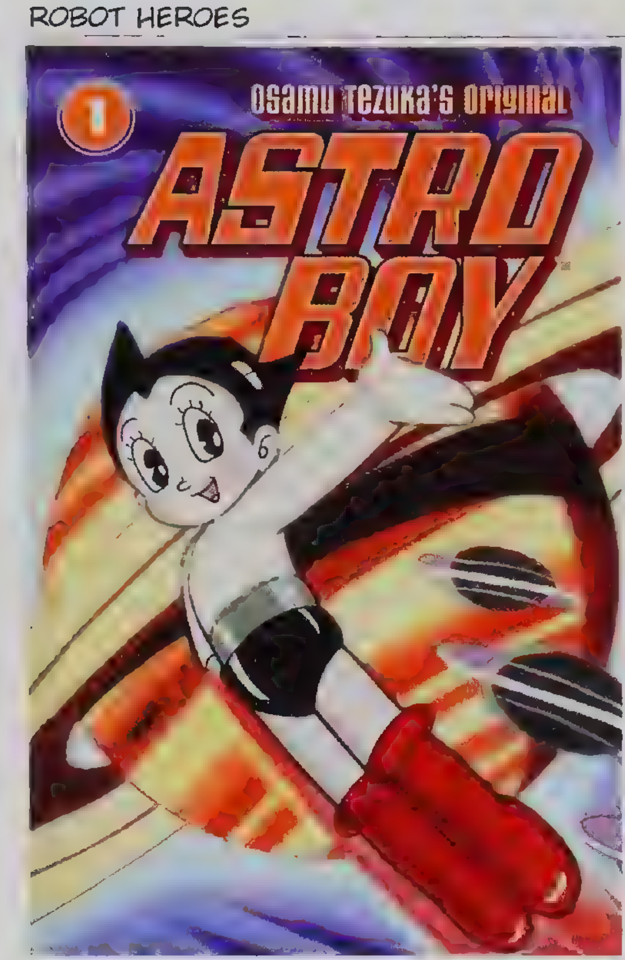
In perhaps the biggest surprise of all, Damian Wayne, who is purportedly the genetically enhanced son of Batman and Talia, the daughter of his adversary Ra's al Ghul, turned up in *Batman* #655 (September 2006). Back in 1987, Mike W. Barr had written a graphic novel, *Batman: Son of the Demon,* in which Talia gave birth to Batman's son. For years DC continuity ignored this story, until writer Grant Morrison introduced the boy into *Batman,* naming him Damian. Following Batman's disappearance, Dick Grayson takes over the role of Batman. Ten-year-old Damian becomes his new Robin in *Batman and Robin* #1 (August 2009). Damian has even appeared as Robin in animation, in a 2010 episode of *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* which, however, presents him as the imaginary son of Batman and Catwoman!

When DC Comics relaunched its entire line of comics in September 2011, four Robins appeared in new series. Dick Grayson returned to his previous costumed identity in the new *Nightwing* #1. Jason Todd became the leader of a band of outlaw vigilantes in *The Red Hood and the Outlaws.* Tim Drake, now known as Red Robin, is one of the stars of the new *Teen Titans* series. And Damian Wayne now acts as Robin to the original Batman in the relaunched *Batman and Robin* #1. *—ME & PS*

Robot Heroes

Not every superhero is a human being; some are aliens, some have even been animals, and many have been robots, or, more specifically, androids, which are robots or other artificially created beings that are designed to resemble humans. Indeed, one of the very first superheroes in comics, the original Human Torch, who debuted in *Marvel Comics* #1 (October 1939) was, despite his name, an android that was invented by the scientist Professor Phineas T. Horton.

Writer Jerry Siegel, the co-creator of Superman, and artist Leo Nowak created DC's original Golden Age version of Robotman, who first appeared in *Star-Spangled Comics* #7 (April 1942). Robotman was actually what is now known as a cyborg, a being who is part organic and part robotic. According to his origin story, scientist Robert Crane was murdered, and his brain was transplanted into a robot body, thus becoming Robotman. Crane adopted a new secret identity, Paul Dennis, using a face mask and special gloves to look human. As Robotman he battled crime and became a member of the All-Star Squadron, DC's wartime league of Golden Age heroes. Crane's former assistant, Charles Grayson,



Astro Boy #1 © 2002 Tezuka Productions. (Cover art by Osamu Tezuka.)

bequeathed his body to Crane, whose brain was successfully transplanted into Grayson's body in 1981, restoring Crane to "normal" life.

DC's second Robotman, Cliff Steele, was a race car driver whose body was mortally injured in a car crash. His brain was transplanted by Dr. Niles Caulder into a robot body that Caulder had constructed, and as the new Robotman, Steele became a founding member of Caulder's superhero team, the Doom Patrol. Co-created by writers Arnold Drake and Bob Haney, and artist Bruno Premiani, the second Robotman and the other original members of the Doom Patrol first appeared in *My Greatest Adventure* #80 (June 1963).

The next two major robot superheroes in comics were new versions of non-robotic Golden Age heroes. The original Red Tornado was a woman, "Ma" Hunkel, created by cartoonist Sheldon Mayer; she first appeared in his classic *Scribbly* strip in *All-American Comics* #3 (June 1939), and adopted her superhero identity in issue 20 (November 1940). She was a comedy character who wore actual long underwear, and a pot for a helmet, and became an honorary member of the Justice Society of America.

Introduced by writer Gardner Fox and artist Dick Dillin in *Justice League of America* #64 (August 1968), the second Red Tornado was an android constructed by the JLA's enemy, scientist T. O. Morrow. In what proves to be a familiar scheme, Morrow intended the Tornado to infiltrate the Justice Society, but the Tornado instead rebelled against Morrow, joined the Justice Society, and later joined the Justice League. The Red Tornado can create powerful, tornado-like winds, is superstrong, and can fly.

The original Vision was not a robot but was an eerie being from another dimension, who called himself "Aarkus, Destroyer of Evil." Created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, Aarkus first appeared in *Marvel Mystery Comics* #13 (November 1940). published by Timely Comics (now Marvel). The original Vision could appear and disappear within smoke or mist. In recent years Marvel has revived the character, including starring him in the *Mystic Comics 70th Anniversary Special* (2009).

Inspired by the Golden Age version, writer Roy Thomas and artist John Buscema created the Silver Age version of the Vision, who debuted in *Avengers* #57 (October 1968). This Vision was a kind of android called a "synthezoid," and was created by the Avengers' robot enemy, Ultron, to pose as the Avengers' ally and betray them. Like the Red Tornado, the Vision turned against his creator, and became a longtime member of the Avengers.

Ultron constructed the Vision from the deactivated body of the original Human Torch. Later, it was established that due to a kind of time paradox, the Vision and the reactivated Human Torch existed as separate entities. Ultron originally programmed the Vision's artificial mind with the brain patterns of Simon Williams, alias the superstrong Wonder Man, who had debuted and seemingly died in *Avengers* #9 (October 1964). Later, Wonder Man revived, joined the Avengers, led a second career as a Hollywood movie actor, and starred in his own *Wonder Man* comics series (1991–1994).

The new Vision could mentally control the density of his body. Hence he could make himself hard as diamond, thus becoming nearly indestructible, or turn immaterial, enabling him to pass through walls. He possessed superstrength, could fly, and could project heat beams from the jewel on his forehead. Although the Vision outwardly seemed emotionless, he actually had a strong capacity for emotion, and fell in love with and married his fellow Avenger, the Scarlet Witch. However, their marriage eventually came to an end.

Years later the Vision's body was destroyed. Iron Lad, the founder of the Young Avengers, downloaded the Vision's programming and operating system into his armored battlesuit. When Iron Lad gave up his battlesuit, the Vision took control of it, turning it into his new body and endowing it with his previous superpowers.

Writer/artist Jack Kirby introduced the sentient robot X-51, also known as Machine Man, in issue 8 of Marvel's comics series based on the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (July 1977). The character moved into his own *Machine Man* series in 1978. Seeking to fit into humanity, he adopted a human guise under the name Aaron Stack. He later joined the Avengers and writer Warren Ellis's Nextwave team.

One of the best known and most beloved Japanese superheroes is the robot Astro Boy, who was created by the great Osamu Tezuka, the Walt Disney of Japanese comics (*manga*) and animation (*anime*). Astro Boy debuted in Japanese comics in 1951 and in animation in 1963; the English language version of the animated series premiered in the United States in the fall of that year. Resembling a young boy, Astro Boy seeks to become more human in personality. He has numerous superhuman abilities, including superstrength and flight by means of jets in his arms and legs. He can fire laser beams from his fingers and arms—and even has guns in his rear end! An *Astro Boy* computer-animated movie came out in 2009.

The very first American robot superhero was Quality Comics' oddly-named Bozo the Robot (from *Smash Comics* #1, August 1939). Other robot superheroes in American comics include Timely Comics' superstrong robot hero Electro (from *Marvel Mystery Comics* #4, February 1940); two androids called Dynamic Man, one at Timely (from *Mystic Comics* #1, March 1940), and the other at Dynamic Publications (from *Dynamic Comics*, July 1941); Timely's Marvex the Super-Robot (from *Daring Mystery Comics* #3, April 1940); M-11, the Human Robot (from *Menace* #11, May 1954), who is now a member of Marvel's Agents of Atlas; Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's Elektro, a former menace (from *Tales of Suspense* #13, January 1961), who recently turned hero as a member of Marvel's Fin Fang Four; DC's Metal Men (who debuted in *Showcase* #37, March–April 1962); NoMan of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents (from Tower Comics' *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #1, November 1965); John Byrne's comedic creation Rog-2000, who appeared in Charlton's *E-Man* in the 1970s; Beautie, a life-size, doll-like superpowered android (from *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* #1, August 1995); and Roger Stern and John Byrne's Walkabout (from *Marvel: The Lost Generation* #12, March 2000).

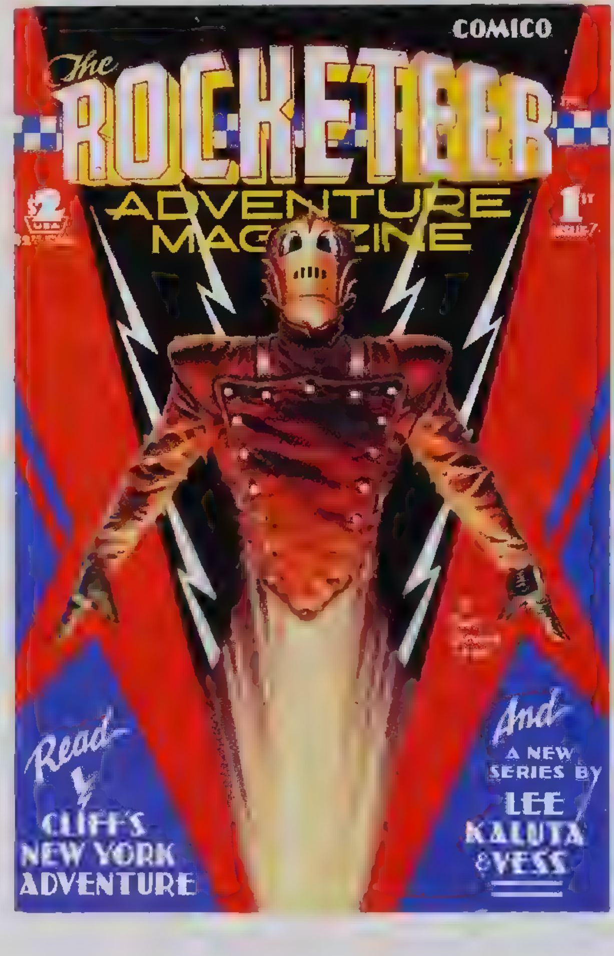
At DC, writer Grant Morrison co-created Tomorrow Woman, an android superheroine who later turned into a real human (from *JLA* #5, May 1997), and the third Hourman (from *JLA* #12, December 1997), an android from the 853rd century. This new Hourman was based on the genetic template of Rex Tyler, the Golden Age Hourman (from *Adventure Comics* #48, April 1940), a superhero whose Miraclo-pill gave him superstrength for one hour. Hiro Takichiro, a brilliant Japanese teenager, invented his robot bodyguard Baymax, a "synthformer" who can change shape, appearing in humanoid form or as a dragon-like being. Both are members of Marvel's Japanese superhero team Big Hero 6 and debuted in *Sunfire and Big Hero 6* #1 (September 1998).

Hanna-Barbera produced animated cartoon series featuring the robot Frankenstein, Jr. (1966) and the robot dog superhero Dynomutt (1976). In writer/director Brad Bird's animated film *The Iron Giant* (1999), based on a 1968 book by Ted Hughes, the colossal alien robot, who is the title hero, consciously regards Superman as his role model. *—PS*

The Rocketeer

In 1991 few moviegoers would have been aware that *The Rocketeer* had been a comic book before it was a film, but, in fact, the character had been a cult favorite in print for years before he appeared on the silver screen. The character's genesis was inauspicious, to say the least: Artist Dave Stevens was approached at a comic book convention by upstart publishing house Pacific Comics to fill a couple of six-page gaps at the back of their new *Starslayer* comic. Pacific was desperate and simply did not care what Stevens came up with, but to their undoubted surprise the resulting strip provoked a torrent of rapturous acclaim. With a blank canvas to work on, Stevens decided to indulge his love of 1930s movie serials, especially the ones featuring Commando Cody a.k.a. Rocketman (*King of the Rocketmen, Radar Men from the Moon,* and *Zombies of the Stratosphere*), and created a beautifully rendered homage to a more innocent age.

The story, set in 1938, begins with a couple of hoods on the run from the law, who stash a stolen rocket pack in the cockpit of stunt pilot Cliff Secord's plane. Discovering the strange contraption (effectively a small rocket with a harness to attach it to the pilot's back), Secord seizes on it as the chance for him to become a star at his local airfield, earning him lots of money and impressing his girlfriend Betty. With the help of his curmudgeonly pal Peevy (based on Jonny Quest creator Doug Wildey), he fashions himself a costume of brown breeches, flying jacket, and metal-plumed steel helmet and flies into action. As a normal human being with no superpowers or superweaknesses to speak of, Secord, as the Rocketeer, relies on his super-fast rocket pack to help him save the day. Inevitably, the hoods who had stolen the jet pack in the first place (Nazis, of course) want it back, as does the FBI, and its mysterious inventor (a thinly veiled Doc Savage, complete with cohorts Monk and Ham). This initial story appeared in *Starslayer* #2 and #3 (1982), and the strip was promoted to the lead feature in the first two issues of *Pacific Presents,* before being wrapped up two years later in a *Rocketeer* special edition from Eclipse Comics (after Pacific went under).


COMICO
The ROCKETEER
ADVENTURE MAGAZINE
$2 USA
1st ISSUE
Read CLIFF'S NEW YORK ADVENTURE
And A NEW SERIES BY LEE KALUTA & VESS

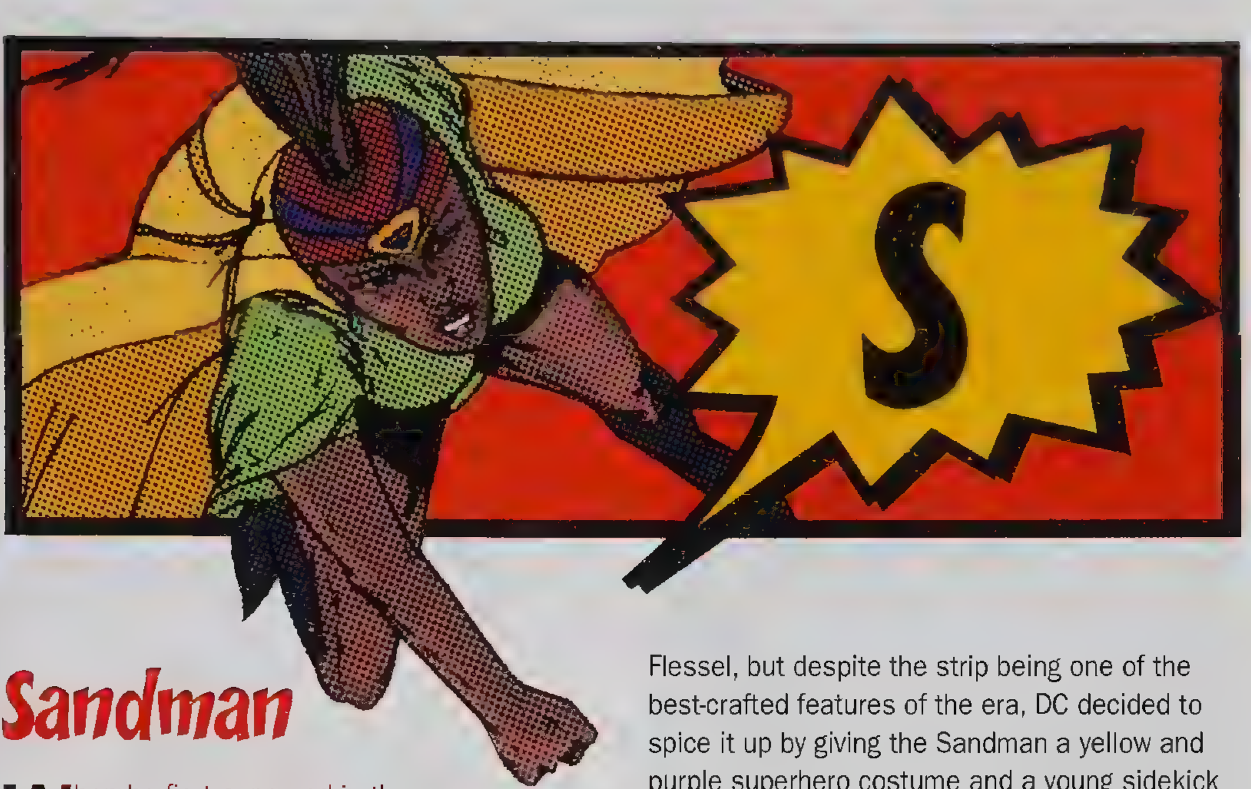
Rocketeer Adventure Magazine #1 © 1988 Dave Stevens. (Cover art by Dave Stevens.)

Stevens had two trump cards: First, he was a fantastic artist, whose mastery of brushwork was second only to his mastery of the female form—which brings us to the comic's second selling point, Secord's girlfriend Betty. Stevens based Betty's appearance on a largely forgotten 1950s pinup model, Bettie Page and, as fans devoured the comic and bought up posters of the fictional Betty in droves, interest was revived in the character's original inspiration. From forgotten model to major twentieth-century icon, Bettie Page's re-emergence as a sex symbol, with a merchandising machine to match, stemmed almost entirely from the pages of *The Rocketeer.* If Betty was a remarkable comic book character, so too was the artist's depiction of the 1930s milieu surrounding her adventures with Secord. Stevens delighted in delineating the eccentric architecture of prewar Hollywood, its stylish cars and airplanes, and its sense of fun.

However, Stevens' burgeoning career as a comic-book artist was matched by his successful life in Hollywood's movie world as a storyboard artist and designer, which meant that it was four more years before a second Rocketeer adventure was serialized. This new tale appeared in 1988, from new publisher Comico. Then Comico went bust after only two issues of the comic, and it was an astonishing six years before the final installment crept out, published by Dark Horse Comics. The new yarn was, if anything, even more majestically drawn than the earlier episodes, and featured hardboiled gangsters, and old-time carnivals and freak shows, not to mention the Shadow (in all but name), complete with autogyro.

Both stories did well in comic book form, but long before the first tale had even been completed, *The Rocketeer* was optioned by Hollywood and eight years later (in 1991) the live-action feature film finally appeared, from the unlikely stable of Disney. *The Rocketeer* was directed by Joe Johnston, a longtime friend of Stevens, and starred Billy Campbell and Jennifer Connelly. Connelly's role, significantly, was as a new damsel-in-distress, Jenny, and not Betty (Disney was wary of the character's connection with the real-life Page and her pinup background). The film was reviewed as a breezy family entertainment film with great special effects. Careful viewers noted the multiple Hollywood references, such as an effective villain (played by Timothy Dalton) that was clearly based on early film actor Errol Flynn. Disney saw the project as a merchandising bonanza, but its loving re-creation of a bygone era failed to connect with a young audience, and so the merchandise was abandoned and the option for two sequels was not executed. Johnston, however, would go on to direct another period superhero movie, *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011).

Dave Stevens died in 2008, but his most famous creation lives on. IDW Publishing launched the new comic book series *Rocketeer Adventures* in 2011, featuring covers by Alex Ross and new *Rocketeer* stories by Michael Allred, Kurt Busiek, John Cassaday, Michael Kaluta, and others.
—*DAR & PS*



Sandman

When he first appeared in the summer of 1939 (in *Adventure Comics* #40), the Sandman was only the fourth superhero in comics history, and the third published by DC Comics (then National Publications), after Superman and Batman. However, he did not possess any superpowers. Like Batman's alter ego, Bruce Wayne, Wesley Dodd was a millionaire playboy who put on a costume to confront hoodlums and ne'er-do-wells, armed only with his fists and wits—and a rather handy gas-gun. Dodd's costume, such as it was, consisted of a purple cape, a slouch hat, a smart suit, and a gold gas mask (necessary because his modus operandi was to gas his foes into slumber with the pull of his trigger). Unusually for superheroes of the period, the Sandman's elegant society girlfriend, Dian (also Diane) Belmont, knew his secret identity and had a habit of helping him out on assignments, invariably dressed in a diaphanous ball gown.

The men responsible for these early episodes were prolific writer Gardner Fox and the young, but talented, artist Bert Christman. Sadly, Christman left the strip to seek adventure of his own as one of General Claire Chenault's legendary Flying Tigers, and was later killed while flying over China in the early days of World War II. His replacement was the equally talented Creig Flessel, but despite the strip being one of the best-crafted features of the era, DC decided to spice it up by giving the Sandman a yellow and purple superhero costume and a young sidekick named Sandy Hawkins. A few issues later, the transformation was complete when Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, recently defected from Marvel Comics, took over the creative reins (with issue #72) and turned it into an all-action slugfest.

The Simon and Kirby Sandman punched first and thought later, and the strip became a frenetic display of all-out battles and daredevil heroics. Unlike other wartime features, the Sandman and Sandy generally fought organized crime and the occasional Norse god, rather than the Third Reich. The strip was the cover feature of *Adventure Comics* throughout the war, but its quality suffered when its creative team was drafted (as creative teams often were at the time), and in February 1946, it became one of the first casualties of the peacetime comics slump and lost its place to Superboy. At the peak of his popularity, the Sandman was featured (in both his guises) in comics such as *World's Finest*, *World's Fair*, and as a member of the Justice Society of America, in *All Star Comics;* it was the latter group that would prove to be his savior.

While the Silver Age (1956–1969) superhero boom of the 1960s saw a whole range of new characters, it also revived some of the old favorites, and for many years, the Justice Society appeared in an annual crossover with the Justice League of America. Between 1966 and 1974, the Sandman was a frequent member of the Justice Society in those team-ups, though it was always in his earlier, gas-mask costume. The last of those stories revealed, somewhat implausibly, that for many years Sandy had been lurking around, transformed into a giant sand creature. Things got even stranger for our hero when Simon and Kirby created another Sandman (published in January 1974 as the one-shot titled *Sandman* #1 and later picked up as a brief mid-1970s series), a yellow-suited hero who lived "somewhere between heaven and earth" in a secret hideout where he monitored people's dreams. Complete with monstrous assistants, Brute and Glob, this Sandman battled the likes of Dr. Spider, the Sealmen, General Electric, and various frog people. Perhaps inevitably, it was just a short-lived experiment but it served, some years later, as the inspiration for yet another Sandman, who premiered in 1989.

This radical reinvention, written by Neil Gaiman, was a fantasy series starring Morpheus (the Sandman of the title, also known as Dream, the Prince of Stories), an angelic-looking girl named Death, and numerous other characters from the realm of dreams. While Morpheus had little to do with previous incarnations of the Sandman character, the comic's enormous critical and commercial success—*Sandman* #19 won the World Fantasy Award for Best Short Story in 1991—rekindled interest in the character. The Sandman comic sold more than 1 million copies per year, and Gaiman was heralded as the creator who reignited a medium, with Norman Mailer proclaiming, "Along with all else, *Sandman* is a comic strip for intellectuals, and I say it's about time." This excellence of writing, in fact, attracted acclaimed guest-talent, including Clive Barker, Sam Keith, and Todd McFarlane. Ten Sandman short-story collections have appeared as of 2004; and Warner Bros. has optioned Sandman for a movie. Though the series ended in 1996, Gaiman has returned to it for such special events as the hardback collection *Endless Nights* (2003), and a number of spinoffs by other creators have also appeared.

In 1993, the original Sandman returned in the *Sandman Mystery Theatre* comic. This *Sandman* spin-off series effectively retold the story of Wesley Dodd and Dian Belmont from their very first adventures, and featured guest stars such as Blackhawk and Hourman. It ran for seventy issues—much longer, ironically, than its 1940s forerunner—and ended in 1999 with Dodd and Belmont heading off for war torn Europe. As if that wasn't enough, yet another Justice Society revival starred an elderly Dodd, still wearing the gas mask, in modern-day adventures, one of which told of how he died. In the 2000s he has been replaced by "Sand" (actually an incarnation of sidekick Sandy!), a gas-masked hero who can transform into his namesake substance (like the Marvel Comics Spider-Man villain also named Sandman); a sure sign of a concept and character durable enough to withstand the sands of time. *—DAR*

The Savage Dragon

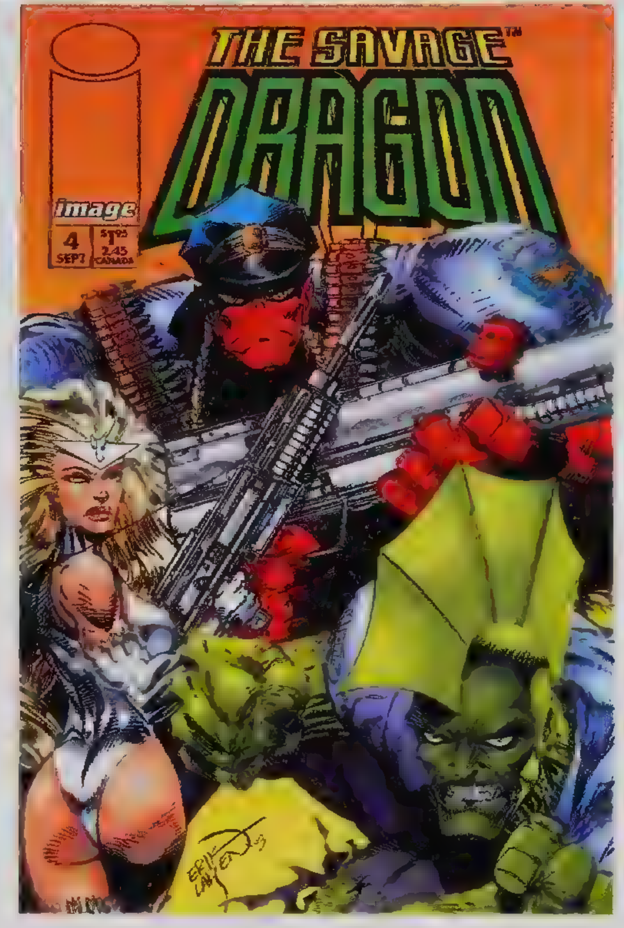
Discovered naked in a burning empty lot in Chicago, an amnesiac green man with fangs and a fin on his head is taken to the hospital. Named "Dragon" by a nurse, the man bonds with Lieutenant Frank Darling of the Chicago Police Department. Later, when Dragon helps stop some super-criminals at the harbor, Darling tries to get Dragon to join the police force to help fight the rising tide of super "freaks." After surviving a tragedy partially engineered by the criminal gang known as the Vicious Circle, Dragon becomes a Chicago PD officer, with a penchant for fighting crime, getting his shirt torn off, and romancing the ladies.

Comic creator Erik Larsen had started in the independent comics trenches, which is where his childhood creation, the Dragon, first saw print (in *Megaton* #3, February 1986). Larsen worked his way up through the comics ranks, eventually becoming a fan favorite on Marvel Comics such as *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Nova*. Larsen left Marvel with six other popular creators to form Image Comics in 1992. *The Savage Dragon* #1 debuted a three-issue miniseries in July 1992, and the regular series has appeared monthly (mostly) ever since its first issue in June 1993. Larsen has written and drawn every issue to date, though other creators came onboard to create special issues, spin-off miniseries, and crossovers with books as diverse as *Destroyer Duck, Marshal Law, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Superman,* and *Megaton Man.*

The Savage Dragon has incredible strength, and can jump huge distances. He is nearly invulnerable to flame, plasma, explosions, and gunfire, though he has been hurt, cut, and even maimed by maces, knives, and other weapons. His healing power is also advanced; he has regrown entire limbs in the past, after battles with supervillains. The most dangerous villains he faced in the past worked for the OverLord, in the Vicious Circle. Villains included SkullFace, Hardware, Abner Cadaver, Arachnid, Clawedd van Damage, Phathead, Stigma, and the waste-spewing Dung. After the death of OverLord, a more charismatic leader named CyberFace took over the Circle, and bedeviled Dragon anew, even succeeding in getting him fired from the police department.

For a time, Dragon worked with a government-sponsored Special Operative Strikeforce, but after facing a personal tragedy on his wedding day, Dragon semi-retired. Sometime later, when Dragon killed an infant who would have grown up to be the villain Damien DarkLord, he caused a disruption in the timestream, and discovered he was now living in a new "Savage World," similar to the old Earth, but different enough to be dangerous. He was forced to figure out friend from foe, and deal with the many surprises that this new life threw at him.

During his run, Dragon has teamed up with a variety of heroes—many of whom have had their own spin-off series or miniseries—including star-spangled cyborg SuperPatriot, the funky weirdoes known as Freak Force, the squabbling Deadly Duo, gender-switching Mighty Man (whose secret identity is a female), and more. Unmatched in this capacity by most of the other Image creators, Larsen has singularly created a vast universe of characters that have an internal consistency. He has also managed to crossover with other series; besides those in specific titles previously mentioned, and other Image heroes, Savage Dragon has interacted with Hellboy, Fem-Force, E-Man, Zot, Vampirella, the DNAgents, and others.



The Savage Dragon #4 © 1993 Erik Larsen. (Cover art by Erik Larsen.)

In October 1995, USA Network debuted a *Savage Dragon* animated series. The series lasted two seasons, ending in the fall of 1996 after twenty-six episodes. Multiple action figures of Dragon and his friends and enemies have been produced, as well as statues, posters, trading cards, and more. Larsen also has an aggressive trade paperback program, so that fans can read all of the Dragon's adventures even if they can't find the back issues.

In the *Image Comics 10th Anniversary* book (2005), Larsen finally revealed the Savage Dragon's origin. He was the evil alien Emperor Kurr, who intended to wipe out all human life on Earth. But two alien scientists stopped Kurr by giving him amnesia and sending him to Earth, where, ironically, he has since become humanity's champion. —*AM*

The Sentry

The Sentry is a character central to the Marvel Comics Universe, though few people have ever heard of him—and that's the point. In 2000, comics fans were used to the scarcity of new characters being added to the bankable Marvel mythos, so it came as no surprise that the "newest" character to be introduced that year might actually be the oldest. Starring in a self-titled miniseries from 2000–2001, the Sentry was said to be a rejected character found in some old Marvel files, historic for being a concept by Marvel founder Stan Lee and artist Artie Rosen that predated Lee and artist Jack Kirby's creation of *Fantastic Four* in 1961. The latter event went on to be considered the landmark that inaugurated an era of more hip and literary superhero comics, while the Sentry languished on the discard pile as Marvel's Pete Best.

Reimagined for the "Marvel Knights" line of edgy books about the company's more offbeat characters, the Sentry, originally a kind of Marvel counterpart to Superman, was portrayed as a demigod too powerful for his own good. The character first appears in what seems to be an alcoholic delusion suffered by suburbanite Bob Reynolds, but, little by little, Reynolds realizes that he was the omnipotent Sentry before being consigned to amnesia for mysterious reasons. Readers gradually learn that the Sentry's addiction to the very serum that gave him his superpowers released a malign, apocalyptic opposite, the Void, from his own subconscious; but the Void is considered a standard archenemy by an unknowing public—and the denial-ridden hero.

The only solution is for the Sentry himself to cease to be, which is impossible physically, but achieved by wiping his (and all the world's) memory of his career. In the present day, the Void has returned with Reynolds' memories, and the Sentry "defeats" him once more—by finally becoming at peace with his existence as an ordinary, imperfect human. With a subtle, sensitive script by Paul Jenkins, and moody, atmospheric art by Jae Lee, the series was a poignant commentary on the loss of heroic illusions and the poisoning tendencies of power. And, for longtime Marvel fans, it was a fascinating trip down the road not taken.

The only trouble was, what might have been never existed to begin with—the Sentry's 1960s creation was a hoax, planted in the fan press by "Artie Rosen," a fictional character himself. Lee fully participated in the gag, which satirized his own famously faulty memory about what was created when. Marvel's "lost" character was really one of its few (and best) new ones after all, and the company had managed the kind of performance-art put-on unheard of in the pulpy realm of comics. It added an extra dimension to the series' own theme of mass amnesia, replacing the usual side-merchandising of characters with a kind of "conceptual tie-in." This was only fitting for a series that marked one of the few cases of a comics company tinkering with its history to make an artistic statement, rather than just rewarm a brand. As one of only two "superhero novels" (along with Marvel's *Earth X*) to come close to the standards of Alan Moore's *Watchmen, The Sentry* was guarded well.

Later, Reynolds returned to his superpowered role as the Sentry, and was acclaimed by the world as a hero. But Reynolds suffered from severe psychological problems, thinking of the Void as a separate entity rather than as a manifestation of himself. Indeed, it was eventually revealed that Reynolds was once a drug addict and murderer, and when he became the heroic Sentry, he projected his guilt onto his alternate persona, the Void. Moreover, the Sentry feared losing control of his vast powers and suffered from panic attacks.

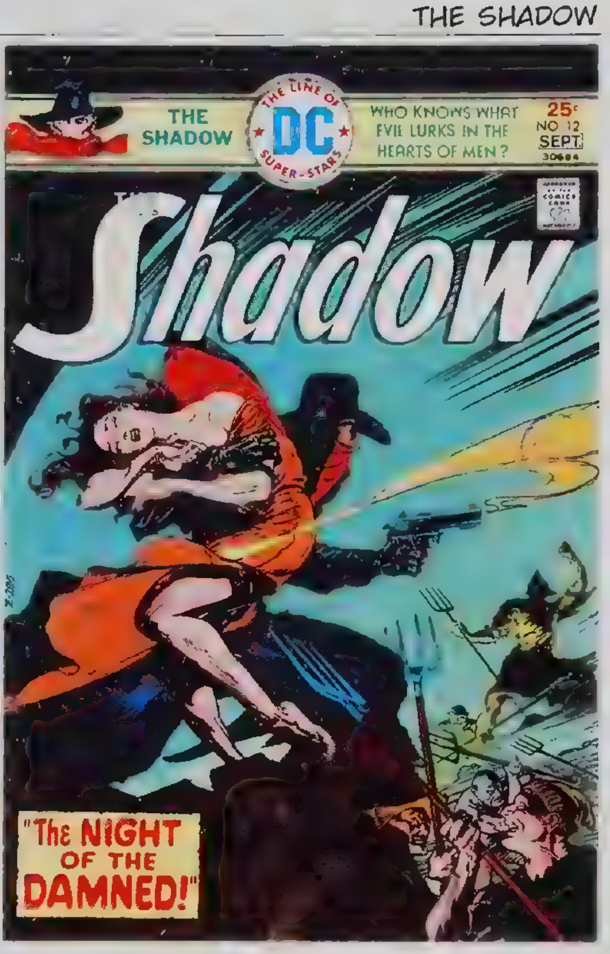
The Sentry joined Iron Man's new Mighty Avengers team, then later joined the Dark Avengers formed by Norman Osborn, who released Reynolds' Void persona and had Reynolds' wife Lindy murdered. On Osborn's orders the Sentry battled Thor, destroyed the new Asgard, and turned into the Void. Battling the Avengers, the Void reverted to Reynolds, who begged them to kill him. Seeing no alternative, Thor slew the Sentry with a lightning bolt and incinerated his body in the sun. The "Golden Guardian of Good" had come to a darkly tragic end. —*AMC & PS*

The Shadow

"Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!" A generation of pulp readers and radio fans grew up knowing by heart that chilling oath, recited by the mysterious scourge of the underworld, the Shadow.

The Shadow's origins lie in radio, where in 1930 pulp publishers Street & Smith were sponsoring a show to promote their *Detective Story* magazine. The weekly program, *Detective Story Magazine Hour,* was a mystery show narrated by a menacing-sounding announcer known only as the Shadow. When Street & Smith realized that this "Shadow" character was creating a lot of interest, they rushed to bring out a pulp magazine by that name before anyone else thought of the idea. To that end, they grabbed a painting that was lying around—the only one they could find showing someone's shadow—to use as a cover, and recruited a young journalist and magician called Walter Gibson. Gibson's brief was to write 60,000 words a month (soon to rise to twice a month) about this Shadow character and to make it a success. Gibson duly obliged.

The first issue of *The Shadow* hit the newsstands in 1931 and introduced an eerie figure swathed in a large, black cloak and hat, with a scarf covering most of his face—a genuine man of mystery who was sworn to punish evildoers of each and every persuasion. It also introduced the first of his many assistants, Harry Vincent, who was about to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge until the Shadow prevented him from doing so. In time, the Shadow collected a band of assistants, including cabbie/chauffeur Moe Shrevnitz, reporter Clyde, switchboard operator Burbank, and African strongman Jericho, among others. The Shadow himself had many identities, including police station janitor Fritz, the aged Phineas Twabley, Henry Arnaud, and George Clarendon, but it was millionaire playboy Lamont Cranston to whom he most often returned. In fact, these were all fictitious identities (except for Cranston, who was a real millionaire whom the Shadow persuaded to leave the country in the magazine's second issue, so that he could assume Cranston's identity), as the Shadow was in story reality Kent Allard, a noted explorer and aviator.


THE SHADOW
THE LINE OF DC SUPER-STARS
WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN?
25¢
NO 12
SEPT.
The Shadow
"The NIGHT OF THE DAMNED!"

The Shadow #12 © 1975 DC Comics. (Cover art by Michael Kaluta.)

The Shadow stories gradually became faster and harsher as the decade progressed, with Gibson adding layers of colorful background to the feature. (The *Detective Story Magazine Hour* radio show was canceled in 1935.) While it is true that the Shadow is mostly identified as a masked mystery man of the pulps, his stories—especially toward the end of the 1930s and into the 1940s—contained many superhero elements and conventions. In print, the Shadow operated out of Cranston's fantastic mansion, which came complete with radio tower and a hangar for his autogyro (a super-helicopter) and limousine. Typically, Burbank would discover some wrongdoing and wire the Shadow and his gang, who would then race into action. The Shadow became increasingly cavalier toward his foes, effectively acting as judge, jury, and executioner, meting out justice with his two blazing .45s while laughing maniacally the whole time. Outside of his various automobiles and aircraft, his only gadgets were suction cups that slipped onto his hands and feet, allowing him to scale walls and tall buildings.

Motivated by a desire to see evil of all manner dismantled, the Shadow quickly amassed a colorful rogues' gallery of foes, including Grayfist, the Robot Master, the Wasp, Murder Master, the Creeper, Voodoo Master, and the Green Terror, as well as such sinister organizations as the Green Hoods and the Silent Seven. While these bizarre antagonists rarely lasted beyond a single story's end, one villain—the self-styled Ruler of Tibet, Shiwan Khan—kept coming back enough times to be considered the Shadow's major nemesis.

The pulp's success sparked a mini merchandising industry that produced pins, costumes, books, games, disguise kits, and much more. Just as the Shadow was inspired by radio, he fittingly returned there for his own show, which thrived until 1954 and starred, among others, Bill Johnstone, Bret Morrison and—most memorably—Orson Welles. On the radio, the Shadow's alter ego was Lamont Cranston, who had acquired all manner of powers, including mind-reading, hypnotism, and even invisibility, through years of study in Tibet. He rarely used the pulp's band of comrades, but he did acquire a pretty young assistant (and potential love interest), Margo Lane. On the radio, she was voiced by veteran actress Agnes Moorehead.

Lane made it into the pulps by the early 1940s, but the title was in decline by that point, young fans having switched to the more wholesome, patriotic heroes of the comic books. Comics readers were introduced to the Shadow in early 1940, when the first issue of *Shadow Comics* (also published by Street & Smith) hit the newsstands. Later that year, a moody Shadow newspaper strip, put out by the Ledger Syndicate, began a two-year run (from June 1940 to June 1942). It was written by Gibson and well drawn by Vernon Greene. Gibson also wrote the comic book for six years (with art by the Jack Binder studio, among others), adapting a lot of his pulp stories, interspersed with reprints of the newspaper strip. These comic strips were very true to the spirit of the pulps, featuring the supporting cast and even Shiwan Khan. Ironically, the comic's artistic high point came after Gibson had left, with a long run by artist Bob Powell from 1946 to its cancellation in 1949. The Powell years featured fanciful fare such as flying saucers and the Shadow Junior, but they were nevertheless masterpieces of dramatic, atmospheric storytelling.

Street & Smith were hit hard by the postwar move away from the superhero genre— as that was precisely what their pulp and comics empires were built on. In 1949, both the comic and the pulp were canceled, the pulp appropriately ending with three issues written by a returning Walter Gibson, with covers by longtime pulp artist George Rozen. The radio show lived on past the death of the pulps until 1954; since then its syndicated reruns have periodically resurfaced in radio shows across the country (as well as various lines of nostalgic media). At its height, the Shadow phenomenon inspired a number of films and serials, launched by a pair of Grand National movies starring Rod La Rocque: *The Shadow Strikes*, in 1937, and *International Crime* a year later. In 1940, Columbia Pictures released a fifteen-chapter serial simply called *The Shadow*, starring Victor Jory, while Monogram Pictures released three Shadow movies in 1946, all starring Kane Richmond. The 1950s were a poor decade for the character, but out of nowhere, in 1958 Republic produced a Shadow movie called *The Invisible Avenger*, starring Richard Der.

In 1963, in the wake of the James Bond phenomenon, publisher Louis Silberkleit picked up the Shadow license and commissioned Walter Gibson to write a spy-themed Shadow novel for his Belmont Books line. The paperback was not a success, but Silberkleit decided to make the most of his investment by moving the franchise over to his rather more successful comics division, Archie Comics. The first couple of Archie *Shadow* comics in 1964 were fairly pedestrian retreads of the pulp stories, but with his third issue the character was inexplicably transformed into a superhero. This Shadow wore a green-and-blue costume with a mask and cape, complete with boot-jets and sonic whistle. In his alter ego of Lamont Cranston, he was a bespectacled businessman, while Lane became his unsuspecting secretary. The strips, written by Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel and drawn by Paul Reinman, have become famed for their poor craftsmanship; there was little attempt at character development, plot, or narrative. The superhero Shadow amassed a rogues' gallery of Grade Z no-hopers, such as Dr. Demon, Elasto, Attila the Hunter, Brute, and Radioactive Rogue, as well as the now inevitable Shiwan Khan. The comic was canceled after only eight issues.

While Silberkleit's 1960s reworkings were unsuccessful, a renewed interest in pulps during the 1970s brought forth a whole slew of high-quality revivals. A number of paperback houses successfully reissued old Gibson Shadow stories, including Pyramid, which commissioned comics star Jim Steranko to paint a series of striking new covers. DC Comics contacted Steranko to helm a new Shadow title for them, but the honors eventually went to writer Denny O'Neil and talented young artist Mike Kaluta. DC's series went through three artists (with Frank Robbins and E. R. Cruz also contributing) in only twelve issues, and it was not the commercial success that the company had hoped for. Nonetheless, the comics were an outstanding example of the medium at its finest. Whereas that 1970s series was faithful to its pulp origins, a 1986 reinvention by Howard Chaykin was anything but. Chaykin's miniseries was set in contemporary New York and, in addition to the old cast, starred Harry Vincent's daughter, Mavis, as a critical sparring partner for the increasingly bloodthirsty Shadow—and his two Tibetan sons! Longtime fans were outraged at the strip's mix of sex and violence, yet it was successful enough to inspire a regular series in 1987 (running for nineteen issues) which, if anything, was even more bizarre.

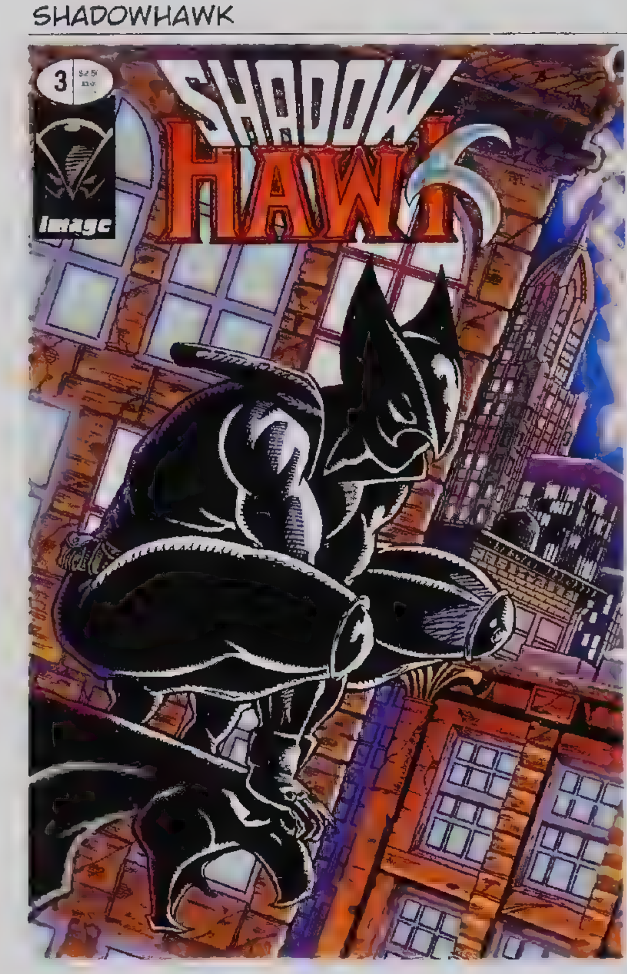
A third DC series of the 1980s, *The Shadow Strikes*, was once more set in the 1930s, as were five mid-1990s outings from Dark Horse Comics, which arrived in the wake of 1994's Universal *Shadow* movie—the most lavish to date. The film, directed by Russell Mulcahy and starring Alec Baldwin, looked fabulous and had all the elements of the pulp's glory years. However, it had none of the original's heart or intelligence, and suffered from a poor script. Nevertheless, the Dark Horse titles once more teamed the Shadow with his definitive comic artist, Mike Kaluta. If little has been seen of the character since the last of these strips in 1995, his influence remains immense. The notion of the creature of the night, operating from his millionaire's mansion, striking terror in the hearts of wrongdoers, has held enormous sway over generations of comics heroes, from Batman and the Black Terror to Moon Knight and beyond. Fittingly, Batman and the Shadow have teamed up twice (in *Batman* #253 and #259) during DC's first, mid-1970s run with the pulp hero, and they made a fine pairing.

Sam Raimi, director of the first three *Spider-Man* films, and Michael Uslan, executive producer of the *Batman* movies, have joined forces to develop a new *The Shadow* motion picture, as Uslan acknowledged in an interview in 2010. —*DAR*

ShadowHawk

At first, he appeared to be a particularly brutal vigilante, moving through the shadows of the New York City night. Wearing a silver helmet, clawed gloves, and a dark armored costume, and with a propensity to break the backs of those who had murdered others, everyone wondered, "Who is ShadowHawk?" Not even the readers of the *ShadowHawk* comic knew the answer to that question at first, as writer/artist Jim Valentino had created the series with a mystery at its core. Coming off successful runs on Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy, What If?,* and other series—and with the legendary superhero spoof *normalman* (1984–1985) behind him—Valentino joined six other popular creators to form Image Comics in 1992.

The debut book to appear from Valentino at Image was *ShadowHawk* #1 (August 1992), the first of a four-issue miniseries. The initial storyline set up the mystery of who the character was, providing lots of supporting-cast suspects for readers to choose from. In *ShadowHawk* vol. 2 #1–#3 (May–July 1993), the secret was revealed. ShadowHawk was really Paul Johnstone, an African American man who had been infected with



ShadowHawk #3 © 1992 Jim Valentino. (Cover art by Jim Valentino.)

the HIV virus. Johnstone used the suit to avenge those who had been killed unjustly. Villains that ShadowHawk fought included a racist named Hawkshadow, the hedonist group Regulators, an acidic alien named the Liquifier, and a female kingpin of crime known as Vendetta.

Although AIDS had been seen in comics before—*Megaton* #4 (April 1986) contains the comics world's first reference to the disease—ShadowHawk was the first superhero to suffer from the disease. Valentino chose not to sensationalize the subject, and actively tried to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about AIDS while telling his stories. Johnstone succumbed to the illness in *ShadowHawk* Vol. 3 #18 (May 1995), the final issue of that series.

The New ShadowHawk #1 debuted in June 1995, written by Kurt Busiek. In it, the "ShadowHawk energy" was dispersed between three people and a robot. Combined with a tale told by superstar writer Alan Moore in *ShadowHawks of Legend* (November 1995), Busiek's stories noted that there had always been ShadowHawks throughout time, in different lands and eras. The energy was actually the essence of an ancient Egyptian shaman who worshipped Horus (an extraterrestrial from Sirius). When the shaman was murdered, his spirit became ShadowHawk and sought revenge for those murdered unjustly. The ShadowHawk essence lived within the silver helmet that Johnstone had worn.

In a series of stories that ran through various titles from Extreme Studios (an Image subimprint run by Rob Liefeld), seventeen-year-old Eddie Collins became the latest ShadowHawk. Able to channel power from the gods, and sharing the memories of all the previous ShadowHawks, Collins is also aided by the morphing suit; it enhances his strength and agility, gives him infrared vision, and allows him to shoot grappling hooks from his gauntlets.

Two new ShadowHawk comics series were launched in the new century, *Jim Valentino's ShadowHawk* Vol. 2 (2005–2006), and *ShadowHawk* Vol. 3 (starting in 2010). The character has appeared on numerous licensed products, including two action figures, card sets, posters, T-shirts, statues, hats, and even a full-cast audio drama. —*AM*

The She-Hulk

Conceived during the run of the highly successful *Incredible Hulk* CBS television series (1978–1982), the She-Hulk sprang from the brain of Stan Lee (the co-creator of the original Hulk, the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the X-Men, and most of Marvel's seminal, early 1960s heroes) and artist John Buscema (who was associated closely with the first *Silver Surfer* series and *Conan the Barbarian*). Created in 1979, principally to prevent competitors from trademarking their own female version of the Hulk—and in the hopes of spawning a television series that never came to fruition—the She-Hulk was Lee's last major creation for Marvel before he relinquished his editorial duties in favor of developing the company's many properties in Hollywood.

The Savage She-Hulk, a monthly series that began its twenty-five-issue run in early 1980, introduced female lawyer Jennifer Walters, a cousin of Robert Bruce Banner (the Hulk's alter-ego). As children, Walters and Banner (who is five years her senior) are very close, though they choose very different life paths later on; while the bookish Banner pursues a career in high-energy physics that culminates in his invention of the gamma bomb that transforms him into the Hulk, the mousy Walters enters UCLA's law school and ultimately becomes a criminal defense attorney. Years later, Banner visits his cousin, to whom he confides the torments he suffers as a consequence of being the Hulk. During this period, Walters is defending a client named Lou Monkton, who has been framed for murder by a mobster named Nicholas Trask. After one of Trask's hit men shoots and wounds Walters, Banner saves her life by giving her an emergency transfusion of his own (gamma-irradiated) blood. Walters soon finds herself transformed into a 650-pound, 6' 7" tower of exquisitely-muscled, emerald female outrage.

Although the She-Hulk initially possesses a real streak of savagery (hence the title of her comic), she quickly becomes quite different from the character that inspired her. Unlike Banner, who becomes a ravening beast when his suppressed anger transforms him into the Hulk, Walters retains her intellect as She-Hulk and can change back to her ordinary human guise at will. She also contrasts sharply with Banner in that she has little desire to return to her human form; the same gamma rays that release Banner's repressed rage also allow Walters to free herself of the prim "lady lawyer" personality that had shackled her throughout her professional life. While Banner is perpetually tortured by his transformations into the Hulk, Walters exults in her newfound power, enjoying her crime-fighting adventures and imbuing them with verve and passion. If the Hulk is a study in emotional repression and mania, his female counterpart embodies instead the liberated, upwardly-mobile professional woman of the early 1980s—attractive, quick of wit, and unintimidated by anyone's glass ceiling. When exposure to radiation traps her permanently in her She-Hulk form (during the 1984–1985 twelve-issue *Marvel Superheroes Secret Wars* miniseries), Walters hardly gives her buttoned-down human persona a second thought.

Like many a refugee from a canceled Marvel series (her first one ran twenty-five issues), the She-Hulk becomes a member of a supergroup, joining the Avengers (*Avengers* vol. 1 #221, July 1982) before temporarily replacing the Fantastic Four's Thing during his extended off-planet leave of absence (*Fantastic Four* vol. 1 #265, April 1984). Even after the Thing's return more than two years later, the She-Hulk (or "Shulkie" as her friends often call her) remains a close friend of (and sometime babysitter for) the FF family.

In 1989, the She-Hulk once again became a monthly series headliner with the debut of *The Sensational She-Hulk.* Written and illustrated by John Byrne (famed for his work on *The Uncanny X-Men* and *The Man of Steel,* the 1986 "reboot" of DC Comics' Superman), this series made much better use of the character's obvious comedic potential than did the previous one. Not only does Jennifer Walters still enjoy being a superpowered jade giantess, she is also keenly aware of the absurdities inherent in the superheroic life. Moreover, she is wryly cognizant of the fact that she is a comic book character, often driving the point home by grabbing panel borders, chasing bad guys by tunneling through the pages of her comics, and speaking directly to the audience (and sometimes even to writer/artist Byrne), in a manner reminiscent of television's *It's Garry Shandling's Show* (1986–1990) or *The Burns and Allen Show* (1950–1958). She-Hulk isn't the only "self-aware" character in the series; Marvel's golden-age Blonde Phantom joins the supporting cast (issue #4), in a deliberate effort to take advantage of the slow aging process that all comic book heroes seem to enjoy (but only as long as they are featured in a monthly comics magazine).

Following a squabble with Marvel, Byrne left the series with issue #50 in April 1993 (having left and returned after another squabble from issue #10 to issue #31, an interim in which, among other writers and artists, Howard the Duck creator Steve Gerber stepped in for a well-regarded run), and the book limped to its finish exactly ten issues later. Since that time, the

She-Hulk has been ubiquitous on Marvel's "guest-star circuit," racking up appearances from the mid-1990s forward, in such titles as *Nova* (vol. 2), *Fantastic Force, Thunderstrike, The Avengers* (vols. 1 and 3), *The Fantastic Four* (vols. 1 and 3), *Iron Man* (vol. 2), *Heroes for Hire,* and *Captain America* (vols. 1–3). She finally regained a fixed address with a new ongoing series in 2004, and another one that ran from 2005 to 2009.

Marvel introduced a second She-Hulk in *Hulk: Raging Thunder* #1 (August 2008), who subsequently starred in the 2009 miniseries *All-New Savage She-Hulk*. She is Lyla, the daughter of an alternate future timeline's versions of the Hulk and the superstrong Thundra. The original and new She-Hulks have become friends and allies.

Jennifer Walters, aka She-Hulk, remains one of Marvel's most consistently merchandised characters, her image appearing on items from drinking cups to apparel. —*MAM*

The Silver Surfer

Though first introduced into an issue of *Fantastic Four* as an afterthought, the Silver Surfer has become one of the great icons of comics and is an enduring cult favorite. In early 1966, *Fantastic Four* #48 was originally intended to feature the superhero team in pitched battle with a new enemy, the colossal, planet-eating alien Galactus. But when Jack Kirby presented his penciled page, writer/editor Stan Lee had a real surprise: Kirby had dreamed up a new hero—a bald, silver man flying through the sky on a silver surfboard, possessed with cosmic power, and apparently acting as Galactus' herald—and simply inserted him into the story. Whatever his genesis, the public (and Lee) took the "Sentinel of the Spaceways" to their hearts, and more appearances in *Fantastic Four* followed soon after.

The initial *Fantastic Four* story ended with the Surfer, touched by the humanity he saw on Earth, turning on Galactus and persuading him to leave the planet alone. Galactus agreed, but punished the Surfer by erecting a barrier around Earth that would keep him restricted to the planet, ensuring years of heartbreak, angst, and mourning for the tortured herald. In the psychedelic 1960s, both the fans and the growing counter-culture movement adored the Surfer, seeing in his James Dean–esque emoting a reflection of their own insecurities and confrontations with society. Indeed, the Surfer himself had much to say about the hot topics of the 1960s—namely, war and peace—Lee himself admitting that he wrote his "most obvious moralizing" through this character. By 1968, the clamor for the hero had grown to a fever pitch and Lee bowed to the inevitable by giving the Surfer his own comic, complete with a long-delayed origin story and (much to the surprise of Kirby) a new artist, the elegant John Buscema.

The Surfer's origin, detailed in *Silver Surfer* #1 (1968), tells of how Norrin Radd, from the planet Zenn-La, becomes Galactus' superpowered scout in order to save his people from the planet-guzzling titan's terrible appetite. Radd has become dissatisfied with his undemanding life on the paradise-like Zenn-La and jumps at Galactus' offer of a life in the stars, reasoning that he could find uninhabited planets for his master to devour and save countless civilizations in the process. ("On and on he soars, dodging meteors—skirting around asteroids—rocketing from planet to planet—with entire galaxies as his ports of call.") However, in accepting a future at Galactus' side, he has to leave the love of his life, the beautiful Shalla Bal, behind, inducing centuries of wistful pining, as the people of his home planet are conveniently immortal.

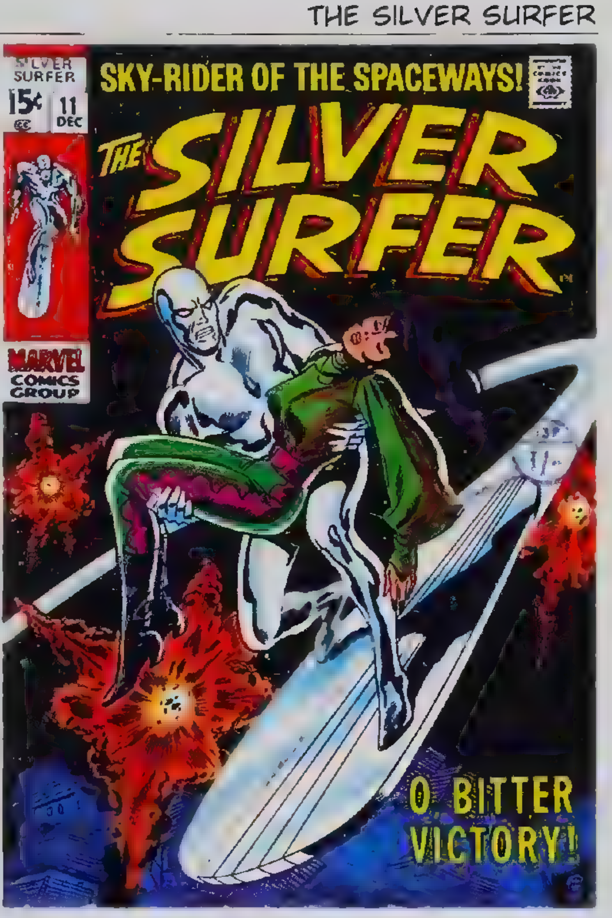
Under the great classicist Buscema, *Silver Surfer* was one of the decade's high points. Exciting, dynamic, and expansive, each issue was a treat for the eyes. However, readers soon became aware that Lee was unsure where to take the title, and Marvel's decision to launch it in an expensive sixty-eight-page format put many potential buyers off.

Issue #3 introduced the Surfer's nemesis, Mephisto—Marvel's answer to the devil himself, complete with pointed ears, sharp teeth, red skin, and flame-filled Stygian lair. Lee had Mephisto tempt the increasingly Christ-like Surfer with riches, power, and women, finally offering him a life with

Shalla Bal, if he would only join him in a career of evil. Inevitably, the Surfer rejected these temptations only to see Shalla Bal whizzed off back to Zenn-La; Mephisto would regularly drag the poor girl into his plans over the next couple of years. As the Surfer's moanings and posturings continued to escalate, fans deserted the comic, and after eighteen issues Marvel threw in the towel. Lee had seen the title as an outlet for his musings on American consciousness, and had reveled in the opportunity to indulge his taste for Shakespearean speeches, but possibly at the expense of the fans' yearning for action and characterization.

Throughout the 1970s, the Silver Surfer was a regular guest star in numerous issues of the Fantastic Four's comic and was a popular member of the Defenders, as well as being a potent iconic symbol for the cognoscenti. In 1978, Lee and Kirby were reunited for a final time on an all-new *Silver Surfer* trade paperback, published by Simon & Schuster—one of the first graphic novels. The story was an alternate take on the Surfer's first journey to Earth, excising the Fantastic Four from the proceedings, and was possibly intended to be the blueprint for a Silver Surfer movie. Rumors persisted throughout the late 1970s that a Silver Surfer film, starring pop singer Olivia Newton John as Shalla Bal, was imminent, but it never materialized, and there was a sense that the character's popularity was on the wane.

A long fallow period in the 1980s, punctuated by a 1982 one-shot, unexpectedly came to a close, in 1987, with a new Silver Surfer series, which this time was a resounding success. Writer Steve Englehart immediately freed the Surfer from his reluctant exile on Earth, correctly seeing that fans would love to explore the wider universe out there. For its first few years, this second series featured all sorts of aliens, the warring Kree and Skrull empires, Galactus, and, inevitably, Shalla Bal. In an intriguing twist, the Surfer was finally able to propose to his beloved, but she rejected him, feeling that the pair had grown apart over the centuries. The 1990s tied the Surfer into new writer Jim Starlin's menagerie of cosmic stars, including Captain Marvel, Warlock, Pip the Troll, and the villainous Thanos.



The Silver Surfer #11 © 1969 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by John Buscema and John Verpoorten.)

While no longer the critics' favorite that he had been in his early days, the period starting with the Englehart series was the Surfer's commercial high point, resulting in a stream of specials, graphic novels, toys, and merchandise. Lee enjoyed occasional reunions with his old favorite, including a 1988 collaboration with the legendary French artist, Moebius, on a short book called *Parable*. In the Surfer's own title his writers began to play around with his history, including a revelation (in issue #48) that, back in the distant past, Galactus had tampered with his soul so that he would agree to become his herald. Other plot twists included the death of Shalla Bal and the destruction of Zenn-La (both inevitably reborn later) and a showdown with Mephisto (again).

The comic's last years were perhaps not its finest, and included Shalla Bal falling in love with the Surfer's (previously unmentioned) half-brother, and the unconvincing revelation that Zenn-La had been destroyed thousands of years earlier and had been an illusion ever since. The sense that, after ten years in the limelight, the character had finally run out of steam was confirmed by the comic's cancellation in 1998, with issue #146.

However, the same decade saw him make it to America's TV screens if still not its multiplexes, as a well-regarded *Silver Surfer* animated series ran from 1998–1999. A co-starring role in Marvel's early 2000s *Defenders* revival was followed by an atmospheric new comic of his own that lasted from 2003 to 2004. After numerous guest appearances in other series, the Silver Surfer starred in a new miniseries in 2011.

In his most high profile appearance to date, the Silver Surfer was one of the title characters in the 2007 Twentieth Century Fox film *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer.* The Surfer that audiences saw onscreen was a combination of actor Doug Jones's physical performance, Laurence Fishburne's voice, and CGI (computer-generated imagery) effects.

Constant reprints of the Silver Surfer's first series (now fondly regarded as a classic) and of his early encounters with the Fantastic Four, as well as high-priced collectibles such as statues and action figures, will doubtless ensure his status as one of America's most memorable heroes. —*DAR*

Space Heroes

Space may be the final frontier, but some superheroes traverse the intergalactic skyways and explore perilous planets, boldly going where the Terran hero has never gone before.

Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon, the headstrong Earthmen who rocketed into futuristic and/or otherworldly adventures, are the prototypical space heroes. Both originated in newspaper comic strips—Rogers in 1929, and Gordon in 1934—and were immortalized beyond the funnies in movie serials, Big Little Books, motion pictures, television series and cartoons, and comic books. Largely forgotten today is the earth-bound Flash-and-Buck variant named Blue Bolt, who fought outlandish menaces and secret societies *underground* and, in 1940, became the first character collaborated on by the soon-to-be-legendary Joe Simon and Jack Kirby team.

Lacking superpowers, unique costumes, and codenames, Buck and Flash were not themselves superheroes. However, the colorful costumes, exotic locales, and larger-than-life menaces in the *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon* comic strips were a major influence upon the first superhero, Superman (actually a "strange visitor from another planet" himself) and upon the burgeoning comic-book industry.

With Julius "Julie" Schwartz—the founder of science fiction fandom and a former sci-fi literary agent—in the editorial pool of DC Comics, space heroes dotted DC's publishing starscape of the 1950s. *Strange Adventures* #9 (1951) premiered Captain Comet, actually Adam Blake, an evolutionary fluke—comics' first *mutant*—centuries ahead of his time. Captain Comet fought crooks and aliens with ESP, flight, and psychokinesis; for example, in *Strange Adventures* #28's (1953) "Devil's Island in Space," Comet's "super-normal senses detect danger," but his eyes cannot see the invisible invaders encircling him. Schwartz's best-remembered, and most enduring, sci-fi superhero is the jetpacked Adam Strange, premiering in *Showcase* #17 (1958) and sporadically appearing in a myriad of comics, including *Justice League of America.* Schwartz's Silver Age version of Green Lantern, Hal Jordan, who debuted in 1959, though based on Earth, is a member of the Green Lantern Corps, an organization of lawmen from thousands of worlds who protect the universe.

Editor Mort Weisinger's Legion of Super-Heroes, introduced in 1958, is comprised of young superpowered heroes from many different worlds, who have adventures ranging throughout the universe.

DC editor Jack Schiff unveiled the Space Ranger in *Showcase* #15 (1958). The Ranger had a secret identity—business heir Rick Starr—and donned a red-and-yellow spacesuit, with a bubble helmet and a rocketpack, to fight futuristic bad guys (the Jungle Beasts of Jupiter and the Alien Brat from Planet Byra, among others) with a cutesy alien pal, Cryll, by his side. Ultra the Multi-Alien, commencing in *Mystery in Space* #103

(1965), was a bizarre DC hero whose ragtag body was composed of four ethereal life forms.

The "space race" between the United States and Russia encouraged a trend of star-spanning superheroes during the 1960s. Marvel Comics' Silver Surfer flew into the pages of *Fantastic Four* #48 (1966), first as the herald to the world-eating Galactus, then as a superhero in his own right. Mar-Vell, a military officer from the Kree empire, trekked to Earth in *Marvel Super Heroes* #12 (1967), where he became known as Captain Marvel, fighting aliens and supervillains for years, before dying of cancer and being succeeded by his son, Genis. The Guardians of the Galaxy—Vance Astro, Charlie-27, Yondu, Starhawk, Martinex, and Nikki—was a superteam that premiered in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18 (1969), waging war against serpentine soldiers that enslaved future Earth. In 1967, Hanna-Barbera introduced the animated hero Space Ghost, who used his power bands to battle Brak, Moltar, and other galactic antagonists.

In Marvel's *Fantastic Four* #66 and 67 (September and October 1967), Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created "Him," a godlike being who was genetically engineered by scientists in a weird complex called the "Beehive." Then in *Marvel Premiere* #1 (April 1972), writer Roy Thomas and artist Gil Kane gave "Him" the new identity of Adam Warlock. In this story "Him" encountered Lee and Kirby's master genetic engineer, the High Evolutionary, who created Counter-Earth, a duplicate of Earth orbiting on the opposite side of the sun. But the High Evolutionary's devilish creation, the Man-Beast, corrupted the human race of Counter-Earth. In a science fiction parallel to the story of Christ, "Him," as Adam Warlock, descended to Counter-Earth to become its savior. This launched the story line of his first series, *The Power of Warlock* (1972–1973), which concluded in *The Incredible Hulk* #176–178 (June–August 1974) with Warlock's death and resurrection.

Subsequently, Jim Starlin, the writer and artist most associated with the character, brought back Warlock in *Strange Tales* #178–181 (February–August 1975) and then in a revival of the *Warlock* series (1975–1976). In this period, Starlin depicted Warlock's adventures in outer space, most notably his clash with his alternate future self, the evil Magus, and his tyrannical Universal Church of Truth. In *Avengers Annual* #7 and *Marvel Two-in-One Annual* #2 (both 1977), Warlock was slain by the mad Titan Thanos, but his spirit turned Thanos to stone.

Starlin resurrected Warlock once more in *The Infinity Gauntlet* (1991), and Warlock thereafter headed a superhero team in *Warlock and the Infinity Watch* (1992–1995). Adam Warlock played a major role in other Starlin cosmic epics, including *The Infinity War* (1992), *The Infinity Crusade* (1993), and *The Infinity Abyss* (2002). In recent years, Adam Warlock joined the new present-day Guardians of the Galaxy. Adam Warlock was killed yet again in *The Thanos Imperative* #2 (July 2010), but it seems unlikely that this death will be any more permanent than his previous demises.

Writer Chris Claremont and artist Bill Sienkiewicz co-created another Marvel space hero called Warlock in *The New Mutants* #18 (August 1984). This Warlock is a shapeshifting "techno-organic" alien, who joined the New Mutants and starred in his own 1999–2000 comics series.

Writer Steve Englehart and artist Steve Gan created Peter Quill, the cosmic adventurer known as Star-Lord, in *Marvel Preview* #4 (January 1976). Recently, Star-Lord became the leader of the present day Guardians of the Galaxy.

Writers Steve Gerber and Mary Skrenes, and artist Jim Mooney, created the short-lived, enigmatic Marvel series *Omega the Unknown* (1976–1977). This series had two protagonists. One was Omega, an alien superhero who came to Earth after robots wiped out the rest of his race. The other is James-Michael Starling, a precocious, emotionally disconnected young boy, whose seeming parents turn out to be robots and are destroyed. Both Omega, who rarely speaks, and James-Michael come to live in the then rundown Hell's Kitchen area of Manhattan, and the series tantalizingly hints at a strange, undefined link between the two of them. The series was canceled with its tenth issue, in which Omega dies. Steven Grant wrote a resolution to the series in *The Defenders* in 1979, but how Gerber and Skrenes would have solved *Omega*'s mysteries remains unknown, as Gerber passed away in

2008. Award-winning novelist Jonathan Lethem and artist Farel Dalrymple collaborated on a new *Omega the Unknown* series (2007–2008) that retold and considerably revised the original storyline, taking it to a different conclusion.

Writer Mike Baron and artist Steve Rude created Nexus, a superhero who lives on another world 500 years in the future, in *Nexus* #1 (January 1981), published by Capital Comics. Nexus dreams about mass murderers, whom he then hunts down and executes, He draws his superpowers from the fusion energies from within stars. Later *Nexus* stories have been published by First Comics and Dark Horse.

Marvel's 1987 *Comet Man* series was co-created by actors Bill Mumy and Miguel Ferrer, who wrote the comics, and artist Kelley Jones. The title character is Dr. Stephen Beckley, an astrophysicist who travels in a spaceship into the tail of z comet. There he encounters an alien named Max, who recreates Beckley, endowing him with superhuman powers such as superstrength, telekinesis, and the ability to teleport himself.

Wendell Vaughn, the superhero known as Quasar, served as the "protector of the universe" in the *Quasar* comics series (1989–1994), co-created and written by the late Mark Gruenwald. Quasar's weapons are the Quantum Bands he wears on his wrists, which can project quantum energy, in the form of heat, force, or solid constructs (not unlike those created by Green Lantern's power ring), and project different forms of electromagnetic energy as well. Although Vaughn was apparently killed off in the mini-series *Annihilation: Nova* (2006), he has since turned up alive and joined a new cosmic superhero team, the Annihilators

Created by writers Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning in *The Thanos Imperative: Devastation* (2011), the Annihilators is a team of cosmic warriors that includes Beta Ray Bill (an alien version of Thor, created by Walter Simonson), Gladiator (the leader of the Shi'ar galactic empire's Imperial Guard), Quasar (Wendell Vaughn), Ronan the Accuser (the chief law enforcer of the alien Kree), and the Silver Surfer.

Other superhero/science fiction comics series are set in dystopian futures rather than in outer space. Jack Kirby created the 1974–1975 DC Comics series *OMAC: One Man Army Corps,* which was set in the future, "The World That's Coming." In it a nondescript worker, aptly named Buddy Blank, is transformed by the orbiting satellite called Brother Eye into the superhumanly powerful OMAC. In this form he serves the Global Peace Agency to combat threats to world security. OMAC guest starred in "When OMAC Strikes!", a 2009 episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold.* In September 2011, DC launched a new *OMAC* comics series, written by Dan DiDio and Keith Giffen, and drawn by Giffen, in which Kevin Kho becomes the new, modern day OMAC.

Marvel's original Deathlok is Luther Manning, a cyborg warrior, part man and part machine, who was originally set in an alternate post-apocalyptic future (in 1990!). Created by artist Rich Buckler and writer Doug Moench, Deathlok debuted in *Astonishing Tales* #25 (August 1974). *Deathlok* #1 (July 1990) introduced a contemporary version of the character, a pacifistic African American scholar named Michael Collins, who was converted into a cyborg warrior against his will.

It can be argued whether Britain's famous Judge Dredd qualifies as a superhero. Created by writer John Wagner and artist Carlos Ezquerra in IPC Media's *2000 A. D.* #2 (March 5, 1977), Judge Dredd is the most prominent of the "Judges" who enforce the law, acting as judge, jury, and executioner, in Mega-City One, an American metropolis in the twenty-second century. Known for his catchphrase "I am the law," Judge Dredd is famously harsh even against minor lawbreakers. Sylvester Stallone played the title role in a poorly received 1995 live-action *Judge Dredd* movie; the live-action film, titled *Dredd,* starring Karl Urban in the title role, is scheduled for release in 2012. *—ME & PS*

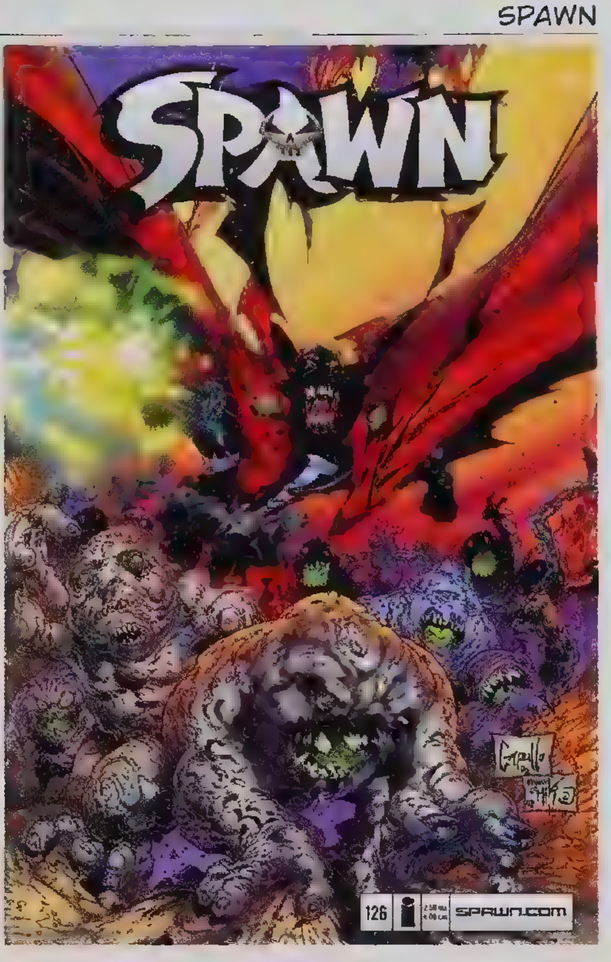
Spawn

Of the many creator-owned superhero properties that sprang from the 1992 advent of Image Comics, Spawn is without doubt the most influential. Conceived, written, and illustrated by

Image co-founder Todd McFarlane—best known previously for writing and drawing Marvel Comics' multiplatinum-selling *Spider Man* series (1990–1991)—*Spawn* #1 (1992) begins the story of former U.S. Marine Corps soldier Al Simmons (a character named after one of McFarlane's college friends), who progresses to a brilliant career as a covert intelligence operative after distinguishing himself by saving the president of the United States from an assassin's bullet. Simmons subsequently discovers that his mentor and superior, Jason Wynn, is presiding over a web of international intrigue and corruption. Wynn protects his secrets by sending an operative named Chapel (a character from fellow Image partner Rob Liefeld's *Youngblood* series) to murder Simmons by burning his face off with a laser.

Simmons finds himself not only dead, but also doomed to an eternity in hell because of the many crimes he had committed as a covert government operative. But Simmons has never taken defeat well; at the precise moment of his death, he makes a deal with Malebolgia, the demonic overlord of a Dantean "eighth sphere of hell." Thanks to this unholy bargain, Simmons gains the power to return to the world of the living, where he can see his beloved wife again; and, as the hellborn creature known as Spawn, he now has an opportunity to wreak vengeance on the man who engineered his death. Spawn's hell-haggled supernatural powers include teleportation, superhuman strength and endurance, and the ability to transform his facial features—left in horrific ruins by the laser Chapel used to kill him—on a temporary basis. Added to his skills as a trained killer, these new gifts make Simmons all but unstoppable in combat.

Spawn's resurrection wasn't the first such occurrence in the annals of superhero comics. McFarlane's demonic hero embroidered on such ectoplasmic predecessors as the Spectre (a powerful and vengeful shade who originated in DC Comics' Golden Age [1938–1954]) and Deadman (who haunted DC's Silver Age [1956–1969] *Strange Adventures* anthology title), by exploring the consequences that flow from bargains made with the forces of darkness. After agreeing to be transformed into Spawn, Simmons finds himself back on Earth—where he learns that five years has passed since his death, and discovers that he is free to use his powers to do battle against minions of hell and other evildoers. But he also finds that he is expected to command Malebolgia's demon armies in a war against the forces of heaven. Even more painfully, he learns that his wife has remarried and is now raising a family with her new husband. Unwilling to cause his widow further grief by re-entering her life—and not wishing to frighten her by allowing her to see his horribly scarred visage—Spawn opts to live out his days in the world's back alleys, among the dregs of humanity. Determined not to use his abilities to enhance the power of evil in the world, Spawn turns against Malebolgia, whom he sees as having betrayed the spirit of their bargain. Spawn subsequently commits himself to bringing the powerful demon down, while simultaneously trying to redeem himself for his prior misdeeds as a covert intelligence operative. Like Marvel's



Spawn #126 © 2003 Todd McFarlane. (Cover art by Greg Capullo and Danny Miki.)

Punisher and DC's Batman, Spawn is separated from his family by forces beyond his control and responds to his trauma by waging an eternal one-man war against all the evil he encounters.

Despite his good intentions and dogged determination, Spawn must also contend with some sharp constraints against the use of his preternatural abilities; his battle against hell is hampered by the fact that killing the bad guys he encounters merely sends more evil souls into Malebolgia's employ, thus increasing the "evil quotient" of the universe. Also, every time he uses his abilities he places himself in danger of permanently returning himself to hell by depleting his finite supply of eldritch energy. On top of that, his cloak and some of the other pieces of his way-cool, heavy-metal costume are sentient, parasitic entities with agendas of their own. Simmons' life is further complicated by the unwanted presence of the Violator, an evil, sadistic clown sent by Malebolgia to act as Spawn's "chaperone" on Earth—a sort of "guardian demon," who might have been conceived by a Satanic Frank Capra.

Because the series combined the twin *zeitgeists* of its time—a reliance on the "gritty" ultraviolence that became the *lingua franca* of many superhero comics of the late 1980s, and an emphasis on aesthetics that sometimes overshadowed its storytelling—*Spawn* became an immediate hit among comics readers, collectors, and speculators. Spawn's appeal, which is strongest among teens and heavy metal enthusiasts, stems in no small part from his appearance, which is derivative of many of the superheroes (and rock bands) McFarlane grew up with. Spawn's costume clearly shows the influence of Marvel's Spider-Man, Doctor Strange, and the Punisher, along with liberal dollops of DC's Batman and Lobo. Spawn's visual appeal arguably transcends the milieu of the violent postmodern superhero; he wouldn't look at all out of place playing rhythm guitar with such rock bands as KISS or Gwar.

The unrelentingly grim tone of *Spawn* might have stalled the series creatively fairly early in its run, had McFarlane not decided to bring in some new blood. Fan favorite writer Alan Moore, who gained international prominence after penning DC's seminal 1986–1987 *Watchmen* miniseries, wrote *Spawn* #8 (1993), and subsequent issues were authored by Neil Gaiman (best known for DC/Vertigo's long-running *Sandman* series), Frank Miller (of *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* fame), Dave Sim (creator and writer-artist of *Cerebus the Aardvark*), and Grant Morrison (DC's *Animal Man*). Thanks in part to the efforts of these creators, Spawn's mythos evolved significantly in sophistication and expanded to include such new personages as the Hellspawn (earlier incarnations of Malebolgia's minions), Cogliostro (a powerful ally to Spawn, whose immortal nature and lengthy history are evocative of DC's Phantom Stranger), an angel known as Angela, and an antagonist called the Anti-Spawn.

As the 1990s progressed, not only did *Spawn* become a popular stop for talented guest writers, the character also guest-starred in such intercompany "crossover" comics as *Batman-Spawn: War Devil* and *Spawn-Batman* (both 1994 Image Comics/DC Comics co-productions). *Spawn* also engendered several comics spin-offs, including *Spawn Blood Feud* (four issues, 1995); *Spawn: Blood and Salvation* (a 1999 one-shot); *Spawn: The Undead* (1999–2000); and such long-running titles as *Sam & Twitch* (1999–present), about a pair of urban detectives investigating the supernatural in a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* meets *NYPD Blue* setting; *Spawn: The Dark Ages* (1999–2001); and *Hellspawn* (2000–present), the latter two of which feature versions of Spawn (Malebolgia's other demonic military commanders) that are even meaner than the original 1992 incarnation.

Taking on a life of his own during his first half-decade of existence, Spawn also became the subject of a 1997 feature film, *Spawn*, starring Michael Jai and directed by Mark A. Z. Dippé. This gave rise to an Emmy Award–winning HBO animated series (1997–1999), and provided a major impetus to Todd McFarlane's toy company (McFarlane Toys), which generated huge sales with its line of action figures based not only upon Spawn, but also on such licensed properties as KISS, *Shrek*, *The X-Files*, Austin Powers, *Army of Darkness*, *Alien*, *Predator*, and the Beatles.

Comics, toys, films, and television series aside, the greatest contribution that Spawn—and

McFarlane—have made to the superhero genre may be in encouraging comics creators either to retain ownership and control of their creations, or to obtain better payment for their work. Like artist Neal Adams, whose crusades in the late 1960s and early 1970s on behalf of creators' rights pressured comics publishers to offer better terms to artists and writers than those found in the industry's then-standard "work-for-hire" contracts, McFarlane exerted a similar influence on the publisher-creator dynamic during the 1990s and beyond; indeed, McFarlane was one of Marvel's highest-paid creators while he was still writing and drawing *Spider-Man*.

Whether McFarlane's aesthetic effect on comics was equally salutary will no doubt be debated for many years to come, however. But for good or ill, Spawn's "grittification" of the storytelling and design of many other superhero comics published over the past decade is undeniable, showing up clearly in such Image titles as *Witchblade* (1995), *The Darkness* (1996), *Violent Messiahs* (1997), and *Rising Stars* (1999). The darkness and otherworldly violence that characterize Spawn can also be seen in comics such as *30 Days of Night* (Idea Design Works, 2002), by Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith (who collaborated earlier on McFarlane's *Hellspawn*); in *Criminal Macabre* (also by Niles and Templesmith, from Dark Horse Comics, 2003); and *The Authority* (1999, DC/Wildstorm).

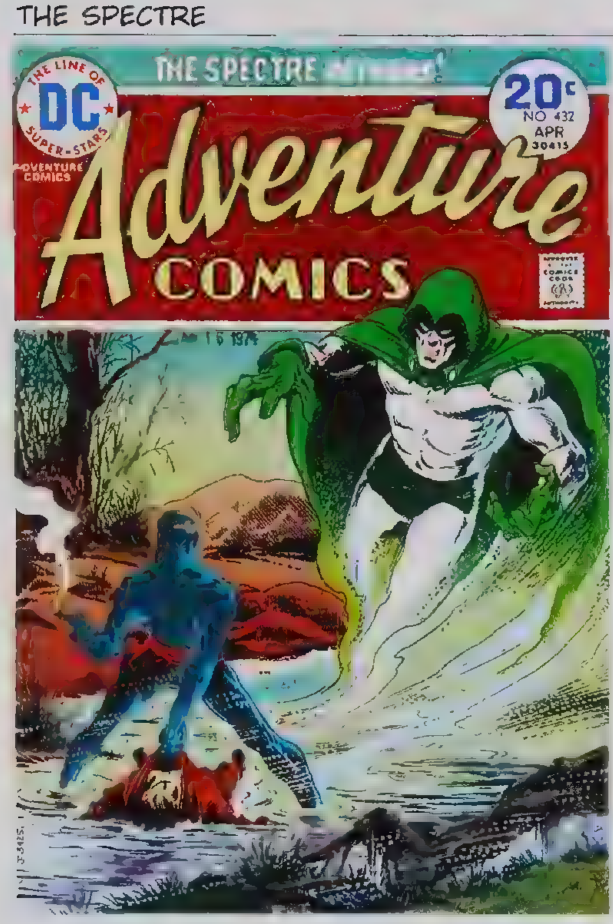
Having successfully weathered the myriad ups and downs of the comics business since *Spawn*'s inception—including the 1996 breakup of the core Image Comics partners and an ultimately successful (and costly) defamation lawsuit filed against McFarlane, in 1999, by hockey player Tony Twist, who objected to having one of Spawn's villains (a gangster) named after him—Todd McFarlane still runs Todd McFarlane Productions (TMP) today. TMP oversees Spawn's considerable licensing empire and continues to publish the original, ever-durable *Spawn* title, as well as its current spin-offs, which employ numerous other artists and writers. Whatever criticisms its detractors may have, including the introduction of new incarnations of the character, such as the New Spawn and Omega Spawn, Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* represents one of the most phenomenal success stories in the history of superhero comics. —*MAM*

The Spectre

Within a year of Superman's first appearance, DC Comics followed up with Batman and the Sandman. Soon after, among a flood of colorful crime fighters, Superman creator Jerry Siegel invented the first supernatural hero, the Spectre. Drawn by young artist Bernard Baily, Siegel's first Spectre story was featured in *More Fun Comics* #52 in early 1940, and it is safe to say that young comics readers had never seen anything quite like it. The story opens with tough cop Jim Corrigan attending a party celebrating his engagement to socialite Clarice Winston. Following a tip-off, Corrigan rushes to a nearby race course where a bunch of local criminals, "Gat" Benson's hoods, are attempting a robbery. Corrigan rounds them up single-handedly; but later an enraged Benson kidnaps Corrigan, shoves him into a concrete-filled barrel, and throws it (and Corrigan) into a river.

Naturally, this being a comic, death is hardly an impediment to a hero's career, and so, at the gates of Eternity, the voice of God tells Corrigan that his work is not yet complete, and he is returned to earth, where he destroys the gang of crooks. This new "avenging Spectre" has almost limitless powers, including a death stare (by which criminals are literally frightened to death), and the ability to read minds, heal wounds, grow to an immense size, and even travel back in time. Sensing, quite understandably, that he is not quite the same as other men, Corrigan breaks off his engagement to Winston and goes home to sew himself a green, hooded costume.

Over the next couple of years, the Spectre struck terror into the hearts of crooks everywhere and was in many ways a figure of horror himself. He was effectively God's executioner, and whether it was a common hood or an exotic weirdo such as Zor, the Blue Flame, Xmon, or the Black Doom, he dispatched each foe with cold efficiency. Love interest Winston made regular appearances in order to give the Spectre someone to rescue, but the



Adventure Comics #432 © 1974 DC Comics. (Cover art by Jim Aparo.)

Spectre's creators perhaps felt that their character was becoming too unsympathetic. After the character lost the cover slot on *More Fun,* Baily tried to humanize his hero by introducing a comedy sidekick, Percival Popp the Supercop, whose sole purpose was to get into trouble. The only outcome was a steady erosion of the Spectre's unique appeal, and in 1945 the strip was canceled.

For much of the early 1940s, the Spectre was also a regular member of the Justice Society, but while many group members were enjoying successful revivals in the 1960s, the Spectre was conspicuous by his absence. Following a campaign by fans, the Spectral Avenger was finally brought back by editor Julius Schwartz, writer Gardner Fox, and artist Murphy Anderson in three spectacular 1966 issues of *Showcase* comics, which soon led to a regular series. Wary of returning to the original incarnation's rather bloodthirsty personality, the new strip played up the character's mystical side, resulting in a series of rather cosmic, psychedelic adventures. However, this Spectre still lacked the sort of emotional depth that was making Marvel Comic's superheroes so popular, and it was not until the horror-obsessed 1970s that the strip attained any real popularity.

Legend has it, that after editor Joe Orlando was mugged in New York, he envisioned a new Spectre who could wreak the vengeance that he felt so powerless to mete out. With inventive horror writer Michael Fleisher and artist Jim Aparo on board, the new Spectre debuted in the February 1974 issue of *Adventure Comics* #431, to a mixture of acclaim and disbelief. Fleisher had gone back to the Spectre's avenging roots and relished dreaming up new and inventive ways of killing villains. These included turning a hood to wood and sawing him up, cutting someone in half with a colossal pair of scissors, skewering a cell of terrorists with giant protractors, and causing a crime lord to be devoured by a twenty-feet-tall duck! Jim Corrigan himself was now a chain-smoking police detective in the Dirty Harry vein, harder than hard and as cold as the grave. From the start, fan reaction was divided; some loved the hard-hitting stories, while others felt the strip was little more than an exercise in sadism. When DC's executives heard of the fuss, they took a look at the comic and were so appalled that they canceled it on the spot, despite its encouraging sales. Fleisher and Aparo had their revenge years later, however, when the whole series was collected in a deluxe package, complete with the unprinted stories completed before the axe fell. Apparently, what was once shocking was now a classic.

Recent years have seen three more series, which have largely picked up where the 1970s series left off—with varying degrees of success. A lengthy 1990s run (*The Spectre* Vol. 3), written by John Ostrander and primarily drawn by Tom Mandrake, was particularly well received, and daringly even brought back Percival Popp, the Super Cop. Ostrander established that the Spectre was actually a fallen angel named Aztar, who now embodied the Wrath of God. Corrigan was the latest human soul to bond with the Spectre as his host. At the end of Ostrander's run, Corrigan gave up being the Spectre and ascended to heaven.

Subsequently, the spirit Hal Jordan, the Silver Age Green Lantern, who had (temporarily) died, became the Spectre's new human host. This version of the Spectre starred in *The Spectre* Vol. 4. Jordan, however, later returned to life and reassumed his role as Green Lantern. An African American policeman named Crispus Allen, who was killed by a corrupt policeman, then became the new human host of the Spectre.

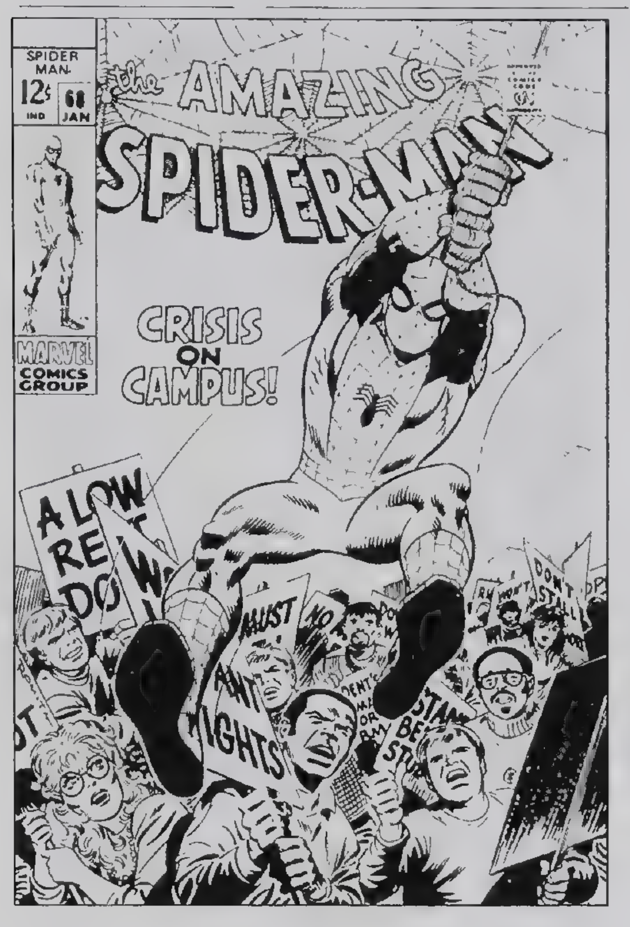
The Spectre appeared in the dramatic "Chill of the Night!" a 2010 episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, in which he was voiced by Mark Hamill (*Star Wars*). The Spectre stars in the animated short *DC Showcase: The Spectre*, which first appeared on the *Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths* DVD in 2010. Gary Cole voiced both the Spectre and his alter ego Jim Corrigan in this short. *—DAR & PS*

Spider-Man

Spider Man is easily the most widely recognized character in Marvel Comics' four-color pantheon, and has been an American pop-culture mainstay for almost five decades. He was a radical departure from the staid conventions of the comic-book superhero of the 1950s—a teenage character that wasn't relegated to sidekick status beside an older, more experienced hero. Creators Stan Lee (editor-scripter) and Steve Ditko (artist-plotter) loosed Spider-Man on an unsuspecting world in 1962, in *Amazing Fantasy* #15, portraying a scientifically brilliant, but socially maladroit, teen named Peter Parker—a high-school everyman—who receives a fateful bite from a radioactive spider during an atomic science demonstration. Parker consequently finds himself in possession of the proportional abilities of an arachnid, including heightened strength, speed, agility, the ability to cling to walls and ceilings, and a precognitive "spider sense" that alerts him to approaching dangers. Using his inborn scientific talents, Parker synthesizes a unique adhesive "web fluid"—though superstrong it dissolves after an hour's exposure to the open air—and builds a pair of wrist-mounted web-shooters that enable him to shape the webbing into various useful forms. He also designs and sews the web-festooned red-and-blue costume that would quickly become "Spidey's" most visible trademark, and a ubiquitous sight along Manhattan's skyline (hence the immortal and oft-repeated tagline, "Your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man").

In addition to possessing superpowers atypical for his era—heroes with arthropod-like abilities were relatively uncommon in the early 1960s—Spider-Man also departs from the background typical of other "long-underwear" characters. Instead of hailing from another world like Superman, inheriting millions like Batman, or having the godlike advantages of Wonder Woman, Spider-Man is essentially an ordinary guy, whose alter ego lives a basically normal life, prior to gaining his extraordinary abilities. Co-creator Lee has described him as "an orphan who lived with his aunt and uncle, a bit of a nerd, a loser in the romance department, and who constantly worried about the fact that his family barely had enough money to live on. Except for his superpower, he'd be the quintessential hard-luck kid. He'd have allergy attacks when fighting the villains, he'd be plagued by ingrown toenails, acne, hay fever, and anything else I could dream up." However, Lee's publisher Martin Goodman wasn't initially receptive to the idea of a teen hero taking center stage, nor did he want to accept Spider-Man's neuroses, romantic deficiencies, and chronic concerns about money. Goodman also thought that the audience would be repelled by the character's spider motif. Fortunately, Lee's instincts prevailed; Spider-Man's debut in *Amazing Fantasy* was an immediate and resounding success.

From the beginning, Spider-Man's behavior deviates significantly from the prevailing superheroic norms as well. Instead of selflessly dedicating his superhuman gifts to crime-fighting or the general betterment of humankind, the newly empowered Spider-Man cashes in on his talents by becoming a television celebrity. After his first performance before the cameras, he refuses to bother to stop a robber from stealing the television station's studio box-office receipts. During the days that follow, Spider-Man's fame grows, though Peter Parker wisely keeps his identity concealed. But his world abruptly collapses a few days later when a burglar murders his uncle, Ben Parker, leaving Peter's Aunt May a widow (Ben and



Amazing Spider-Man #68 © 1969 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by John Romita.)

May Parker had raised young Peter after the boy's parents, Richard and Mary Parker, died while performing espionage on behalf of the U.S. government). The grief-stricken Spider-Man tracks down Uncle Ben's killer, collaring his first criminal—only to make the horrible discovery that the murderer is the very same robber he'd allowed to escape from the television studio. "My fault," a tearful Peter Parker soliloquies after catching the killer. "All my fault! If only I had stopped him when I *could* have. But I *didn't*—and now—Uncle Ben—is dead ..." Spider-Man's debut story closes with a somber narration that permanently sets the series' moral tone: "And a lean, silent figure slowly fades into the gathering darkness, aware at last that in this world, with great power there must also come—great responsibility!"

Although Spider-Man's one-shot comics "pilot" in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 soon led to an ongoing series that began with *The Amazing Spider-Man* (abbreviated *ASM*) vol. 1 #1 in March 1963, the eponymous character immediately became integral to the ever-burgeoning "Marvel universe" as well, interacting (and sometimes exchanging blows) with such mainstays as the Fantastic Four, that group's Human Torch (another teen hero), Daredevil, and the Incredible Hulk. Spidey also quickly developed a colorful, soap opera–worthy supporting cast of his own, including: the rabidly anti-vigilante *Daily Bugle* newspaper publisher J. Jonah Jameson; girlfriend Gwen Stacy (to be replaced later by hipster "party girl" Mary Jane Watson, following Stacy's untimely death); high school jock and bully Flash Thompson, who would later become part of Parker's circle of friends; college roommate Harry Osborn; and a roster of costumed adversaries such as the Chameleon; Mysterio; the Tinkerer; the Vulture; Doctor Octopus; the Sandman; the Lizard, Electro; the Enforcers; the Green Goblin; Kraven the Hunter; the Ringmaster and His Circus of Crime; the Scorpion; the Beetle; Spencer Smythe and the Spider-Slayers; Crime-Master; Molten Man; Master Planner; the Looter (later known as the Meteor Man); and the Kingpin. Like most of the superheroes of his time, Parker took great pains to conceal his secret crime-fighting life from everyone around him; he was largely successful, despite being unmasked on more than one occasion. Stacy's father (NYPD Captain George Stacy) and Watson also figure out his secret on their own, but keep it to themselves. In 2001, even Peter's Aunt May discovers his secret.

Parker is beset by chronic personal and financial difficulties from the outset, such as having to earn enough money to pay his ailing Aunt May's medical bills; she had been poised at death's door virtually from the beginning of *The Amazing Spider-Man,* and even experienced "fake deaths" on two notable occasions. For many years, Peter Parker earned the money he needed to keep his aunt alive by selling photos of himself in action as Spider-Man (taken surreptitiously with an automatic camera, usually webbed to a wall) to his unsuspecting newsprint nemesis, Jameson. But Parker's earnings are barely sufficient to keep body and soul together, let alone properly maintain his Spider-Man costume; on one memorable occasion (*Spectacular Spider-Man* magazine #1), Parker had to make do with a knock-off Spider-Man uniform borrowed from a costume-shop window; on another (*ASM* vol. 1 #258, November 1984), he had to wear a paper bag over his head—and a Fantastic Four uniform lent to him by the Human Torch—while waiting for his Spidey suit to dry in a public Laundromat. Despite the myriad mundane problems Parker faces, he generally approaches life—and crime fighting—with an upbeat attitude and a sly sense of humor that often manifests as wisecracks delivered in the midst of battle.

As *The Amazing Spider-Man* developed through the 1960s, the series distinguished itself with a sense of moral ambiguity that the vast majority of its contemporaries lacked; thanks largely to the inflammatory editorials of *The Daily Bugle*'s Jameson, Spider-Man spends many years as a fugitive from the law, though all the while he is attempting to do good in the world. Spidey's reputation isn't helped when he is blamed for the death of George Stacy, who had actually been killed by Dr. Octopus (*ASM* vol. 1 #90, November 1970). The wall-crawler's first ongoing series is also unusual in that Parker and his supporting cast are not completely frozen in time in the manner of many competing comics. Issue #28 (September 1965) presents Parker's high school graduation. By issue #31 (December 1965) he begins his physics studies at Empire State University, where he meets Gwen Stacy, the first major love of his life, who would later be slain by the first Green Goblin. By issue #185 (October 1978), Parker graduates from college. And in *ASM Annual* #21 (1987), Parker marries the second great love of his life, Mary Jane Watson.

Steve Ditko, the artist who originated Spider-Man's characteristic lean, "spidery" look, left the series with issue #38, after which penciler John Romita took over the illustration chores, adding a dash more realism to the character's still-developing milieu and greatly affecting the look of the rest of the Marvel line as well (Romita eventually became the company's art director). It was Romita who provided the visuals for Spider-Man's climactic battle with the first Green Goblin in 1966, which broke another long-standing superhero taboo—both characters learn one another's secret identities (the Goblin is really Norman Osborn, the industrialist father of Parker's college roommate, Harry). Issues #96–#98 (May–July 1971) broke more new ground by portraying substance abuse by Harry Osborn. Although these three comics (written by Stan Lee and illustrated by Gil Kane) weighed in negatively on illegal drug use, the subject matter was sufficiently ahead of its time to prompt the Comics Code Authority (an industry self-censorship board) to withhold its seal of approval.

Many other Spider-Man artists and writers followed in the creative footsteps of Lee, Ditko, and Romita throughout the 1970s, including such scribes as Gerry Conway, Len Wein, and Marv Wolfman, and such illustrators as Gil Kane, Ross Andru, and Keith Pollard. Even prior to this period, Spider-Man was already a fast-expanding franchise, unable to be contained between the covers of a single monthly publication. Not only had the character crossed over into numerous other Marvel titles (this "shared universe" was always one of Marvel's most appealing features), but he spun off briefly into a large-format magazine titled *Spectacular Spider-Man,* which lasted only two issues (July and November 1968). Spidey's frequent crossovers with other Marvel characters led to a bimonthly title dedicated to this idea, *Marvel Team-Up,* which began in March 1972 and ran for 150 issues. The debut issue teamed Spider-Man with the Human Torch, and the series eventually paired him with nearly every high-profile character in the Marvel universe (the series was replaced by the *Web of Spider-Man* monthly series, which started in April 1985; *Marvel Team-Up* had a second incarnation, an eleven-issue run that began in September 1997).

A new monthly series called *Spidey Super Stories,* intended for younger readers, began publication in October 1974 and lasted for fifty-seven issues. As the 1970s continued, Spider-Man's adventures expanded into a fourth ongoing comic series (a monthly intended for the mainstream Spidey audience) titled *Peter Parker: The Spectacular Spider-Man* (later shortened to *The Spectacular Spider-Man*), which debuted in December 1976 and ran for 263 issues. Marvel parodied the character in such series as *Not Brand Echh* (1967–1969) and *Peter Porker, Spider-Ham* (a bimonthly that began in May 1985 as part of Marvel's kid-oriented Star Comics line). Spider-Man even left the confines of the Marvel universe itself when he took part in the first crossover between the heroes of Marvel and DC Comics, in the large-format ("treasury-sized") *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man* (1976), which heralded several more eagerly-anticipated intercompany crossings during the next several years.

Although Spider-Man's editorial teams blazed fewer new trails than did either the Lee-Ditko or Lee-Romita pairings, as the hero gained increased exposure during the late 1970s and early 1980s, this era still enjoyed some high-quality stories. Roger Stern's "The Kid Who Collected Spider-Man" (*ASM* vol. 1 #248, January 1984) is arguably the finest example. In this haunting, poignant tale, Spider-Man reveals his closely guarded secret identity to a young fan. It isn't until the last panel that readers discover the reason for this revelation—it is a gift to a child who is fated very soon to die from a terminal illness.

Spider-Man's most significant departure from tradition came more than two decades into his run. *ASM* vol. 1 #252 (May 1984) garbs Peter Parker in a new, black-and-white costume, which he acquires on a distant planet during the large-scale, multi-hero/multi-villain, twelve-issue *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars* crossover miniseries (May 1984 through April 1985). This living costume, which supplies its own web-fluid and morphs itself into street clothes in response to Parker's thoughts, turns out to have its own evil, manipulative intellect. After Parker realizes that the symbiotic costume is controlling him, rather than vice versa, he discards it; the jilted costume subsequently "possesses" a former newspaper reporter named Eddie Brock. The costume and Brock—whose reputation was smeared after he had falsely accused Spider-Man of being the serial killer known as the Sin-Eater—join forces to settle their respective scores with the wall-crawler, as Venom (*ASM* vol. 1 #300, May 1988). Venom resembles a supermuscular version of the black-and-white-clad Spider-Man, with the addition of hundreds of razor-sharp teeth and a long, prehensile tongue. This creature subsequently becomes one of Spider-Man's deadliest recurring villains.

The title that launched Spider-Man into the 1990s was called, simply enough, *Spider-Man*, and debuted in August 1990. *Spider-Man* showcased the writing and illustrations of fan-fave artist and *Spawn* originator Todd McFarlane, whose eye-grabbing, rococo style drew unprecedented fan attention to the character. Particularly noteworthy are the detailed renderings of "Ditko-esque" poses and the ornately braided "spaghetti webbing" that flows from Spidey's web-shooters. The first issue of *Spider-Man* also inaugurated Marvel's soon-to-be-ubiquitous practice of releasing a single comic book with multiple covers, a marketing maneuver that arguably appealed more to collector-speculators than to readers. Nevertheless, that issue set a benchmark for sales, pumping more than 3 million copies into direct-market comics shops and newsstand venues around the world, a record that wouldn't be broken until the new *X-Men* title premiered the following year. November 1992 saw the release of the first issue of *Spider-Man 2099*, part of a group of titles set in the Marvel universe of the late twenty-first century. This future Spider-Man, whose real name was Miguel O'Hara, received his powers—which included a biologically extruded webbing that anticipated Sam Raimi's cinematic wall-crawler by a full decade—as a result of exposure to genetic-engineering treatments. *Spider-Man 2099* was published monthly until August 1996 (issue #46). *Spider-Man Unlimited* began its quarterly, twenty-three-issue run in May 1993, part of an aggressive Spidey publishing program that lasted throughout the 1990s, even though comics sales in general softened greatly as the decade wore on. Numerous limited series, graphic novels, and reprint collections continued to appear throughout this period.

One of the biggest shakeups in Parker's 1990s adventures was a story arc commonly known as "the Clone Saga," which began in the Spidey comics that bore October and November 1994 cover dates. This was intended to reveal that Peter Parker is actually a clone of Spider-Man, made way back in *ASM* vol. 1 #149 (October 1975) by the Jackal (Miles Warren, one of Parker's college professors), while the real Peter Parker—who had been mistaken for a clone thought killed in an explosion along with the

Jackal—returns in the guise of Ben Reilly (a combination of Ben Parker's first name and May Parker's maiden name). (*ASM* vol. 1 #150 [November 1975] had established that the "Peter Parker" left standing had never definitively learned whether he was the clone or the original.) After Reilly (a.k.a. Parker) returns to New York, the clone Peter Parker decides to leave behind his Spider-Man identity, allowing Reilly to take over as Spider Man. This controversial development is regarded by many critics as one of the most significant editorial missteps in Spider-Man's checkered history because it was confusing and repudiated two decades of settled continuity. The story arc was finally undone by the later revelation that Reilly was, in fact, *not* the original Peter Parker; the entire situation had been engineered by Norman Osborn, the original Green Goblin, who was back from the dead (*Spider-Man* #75, December 1996). Rather than committing wholesale revisionism on the Spidey milieu as the "clone saga" had, *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* (a twenty-five-issue series, beginning in September 1995) instead embroidered the existing web-slinging legend. Written with obvious respect and affection by acclaimed comics scribe Kurt Busiek, these stories were set very early in Spider-Man's timeline, "between the panels" of the earliest Lee-Ditko stories.

Every superheroic icon that endures for several decades is bound to accrete an unwieldy amount of backstory, and Spider-Man is no exception. In *Spider-Man: Chapter One* (which began in December 1998), writer-artist John Byrne—renowned for his complete rewrite of the history, origin, and powers of DC's Superman a dozen years earlier—updated Spider-Man's origin story, as well as his first year as a spandex-clad crime fighter, to mixed reactions. This revamp was ignored and the original version of the continuity remained canonical. January 1999 saw the start of *Peter Parker, Spider-Man,* a new ongoing series, as well as the first issue of volume 2 of *The Amazing Spider-Man,* the revival of Spider-Man's flagship title. Marvel launched its "Ultimate" line of comics, which presents an alternative version of the continuity of its classic characters, with *Ultimate Spider-Man,* which debuted in October 2000. In this series writer Brian Michael Bendis retells the entire Spidey saga from a beginning moved up to the 2000s.

The Amazing Spider-Man vol. 2 #36 (December 2001), written by J. Michael Straczynski (the creator of the *Babylon 5* television series), and drawn by John Romita Jr., dealt with Spider-Man's reactions to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center, thereby gaining national media attention. Consistent with his "everyman" viewpoint, Spider Man sees the non-superpowered police and fire personnel, who risked—and lost—their lives during the catastrophe, as the real heroes of the day. The carnage of September 11 forces Spider-Man to honestly confront the limits of his ability to thwart evil.

In the highly controversial "One More Day" storyline (2007), written by J. Michael Straczynski and Joe Quesada and drawn by Quesada, Peter Parker and Mary Jane make a deal with the demon Mephisto in order to save the life of Aunt May, who has been shot. As a result, Mephisto alters history so that Peter and Mary Jane were never married, thus returning Spider-Man to his traditional single status. In other surprises, J. Jonah Jameson became mayor of New York City; and his father, John Jonah Jameson, Sr., married Peter Parker's Aunt May, in *Amazing Spider-Man* #600 (September 2009).

Originally a monthly comic, *The Amazing Spider-Man* was published three times per month from 2008 to 2010, and, starting in 2011, twice a month. In perhaps the biggest surprise of all, in *Ultimate Spider-Man* the alternate reality version of Peter Parker was killed off in 2011, opening the way for a new young hero to assume the costumed identity of Spider-Man: the half-black, half-Hispanic Miles Morales.

The momentum that Spidey gained in the comics pages was also reflected in Hollywood. Through the 1990s, scripting or getting attached to the "upcoming" *Spider-Man* film production seemed almost a cottage industry. A pilot script was written for a new ABC TV series by Manny Coto, working for New World (which owned Marvel). On the film front, *Terminator* and *Aliens* director James Cameron wrote a treatment and

Tobey Maguire returned for *Spider-Man 3* in 2007. (Marvel/Sony Pictures / The Kobal Collection.)

planned to direct the proposed feature. The web became even more tangled as Golan sold pieces of the rights to Viacom, Carolco, and Columbia TriStar, and Carolco eventually sold their rights to MGM. In 1993 and 1994, multiple lawsuits were filed by all the companies claiming to own the *Spider-Man* rights. The battles finally ended in 1999, and on March 1 of that year, Sony Pictures Entertainment and Marvel Enterprises announced a deal to develop *Spider-Man* for film, television, and merchandise.

Work began on a new script, with David Koepp adapting Cameron's treatment, then Scott Rosenberg and Alvin Sargent coming aboard. In 2000, Sam Raimi was announced as the director, with Tobey Maguire as Spider-Man. Willem Dafoe played Norman Osborn, who became the Green Goblin, and Kirsten Dunst depicted girlfriend Mary Jane Watson. Other cast members included James Franco as Norman's son Harry Osborn, Cliff Robertson as Uncle Ben, Rosemary Harris as Aunt May, J. K. Simmons as J. Jonah Jameson, and Elizabeth Banks as Betty Brant. As rumors flew fast and furious on the Internet, the most controversial element of the film was that Spider-Man's webshooters would be organic, with the webbing coming directly from Parker's wrists.

By the time of its release on May 3, 2002, *Spider-Man* was one of the most widely anticipated films of the new millennium. Merchandising was omnipresent, and opening weekend netted over $114 million! The film would eventually top over $400 million in the United States alone. Critics adored the film, and fans did as well, thanks to a pleasant story, good acting, incredible special effects, and a costume that made real Spider-Man's red-and-blue comic book threads.

Even as filming for *Spider-Man 2* was underway, in July 2003 MTV debuted a new computer-animated *Spider-Man* series that took its continuity not only from the *Spider-Man* feature film, but also from 2003's *Daredevil* movie (with a guest-appearance by the Kingpin). Acclaimed *Ultimate Spider-Man* comic book writer Brian Michael Bendis took an active part in developing the series, which targeted an older demographic than its animated predecessors. Stars aplenty dropped by to voice characters: Neil Patrick Harris took on the title role, with Lisa Loeb as Mary Jane, while guests included Gina Gershon, Ed

Asner, Rob Zombie, Jeffrey Combs, and Michael Clarke Duncan. Only thirteen episodes of the MTV series were produced.

Announced to debut on July 2, 2004, *Spider-Man 2* saw many returning cast members from the first film, including Maguire, Dunst, Franco, Harris, Simmons, and Banks. New to the cast this time was the pre-Lizard scientist Dr. Curt Connors (played by Dylan Baker), and the mechanically armed villain Dr. Octopus (Alfred Molina). With Sam Raimi back in the director's chair as well, and a script by Koepp, Sargent, Alfred Gough, Miles Millar, and Michael Chabon, the web-slinger again made a multi-million-dollar mark in theaters and in the licensing arena.

Sam Raimi also directed what proved to be the last of his trilogy, *Spider-Man 3* (2007), in which Maguire, Dunst, Franco, and the other regular cast members returned to their roles. This film had the Sandman, played by Thomas Haden Church, and Venom, portrayed by Topher Grace, as its villains, and belatedly introduced Gwen Stacy, played by Bryce Dallas Howard, and her father Captain Stacy, depicted by James Cromwell. Another new animated TV series, *The Spectacular Spider-Man,* premiered in 2008.

Tremendously successful in movies, Spider-Man had worse luck in the Broadway musical *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark.* Bono and the Edge, the leading members of the rock band U2, wrote the music and lyrics. The show was originally directed by Julie Taymor, who had directed the spectacularly successful Broadway production of Disney's *The Lion King.* Taymor also collaborated with Glen Berger on the script for the *Spider Man* musical. But the show set a record for the number of preview performances without officially opening: 183. The production, which involved stunts with characters seemingly flying or web-swinging through the air, was plagued by injuries to the performers. Exasperated by the repeated postponements of the official opening, theater critics reviewed the show anyway, and most condemned it. Taymor was forced out, and playwright and Marvel comics writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa was brought in to collaborate with Berger on revisions to the script. The musical finally opened in June 2011; the critics' reviews were still mostly negative, but the show, nevertheless, remained popular with audiences.

Sam Raimi withdrew from making a fourth Spider-Man film, since he felt he could not meet the release date that Sony Pictures wanted. So instead the next Spider-Man film, *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012), has a different director, the appropriately named Marc Webb, and a brand new cast, including Andrew Garfield in the title role, and Emma Stone as Gwen Stacy. The villain is the Lizard, a. k. a. Dr. Curt Connors, played by Rhys Ifans. Other cast members are Martin Sheen as Uncle Ben, Sally Field as Aunt May, and Denis Leary as Captain Stacy. James Vanderbilt, Alvin Sargent, and Steve Kloves worked on the screenplay.

Now almost five decades into his existence, Spider-Man is still going strong, both as a storytelling vehicle and as one of the enduring icons of American popular culture. And thanks to the mass exposure achieved by the film franchise, and its many merchandising tie-ins, there is now no dearth of highly motivated Spidey readers. Although today's Spider-Man titles sell at nowhere near the multimillion-copy levels that characterized McFarlane's 1990 *Spider-Man* premiere, Marvel's friendly neighborhood arachnid, who marked his fiftieth anniversary in 2012, is clearly not about to hang up his webs any time soon. —*MAM & PS*

Spider-Woman

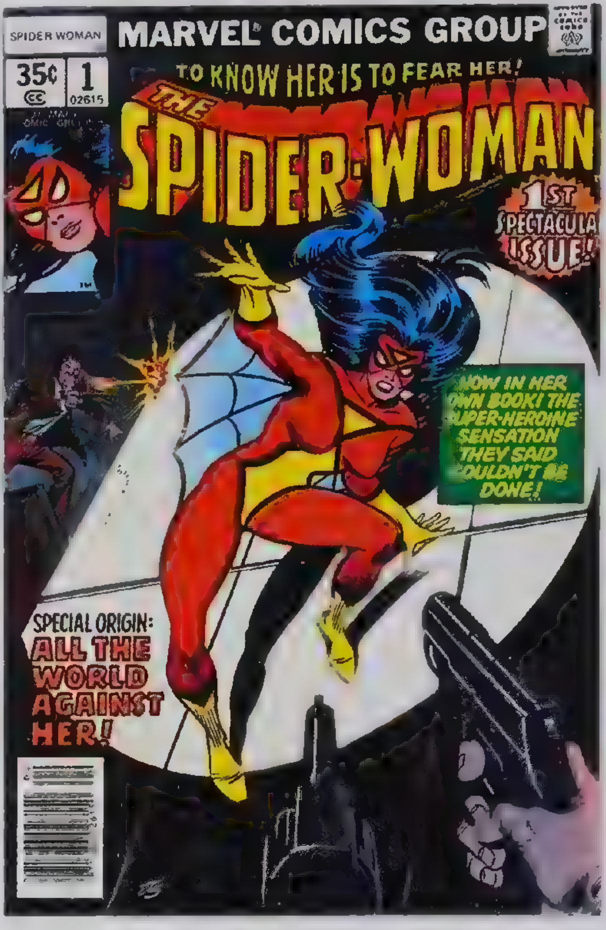
Concerned that someone in either animation or comics would create a female character whose name played off its most popular property, Spider-Man, Marvel's then-president Stan Lee backed the decision to debut a femme fatale named Spider-Woman. Writer/editor Archie Goodwin created the character for *Marvel Spotlight* #32 (February 1977), working with artist Sal Buscema. In this story, the character was an agent for the villainous organization Hydra, assigned to kill Nick Fury, agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., and her origin involved her being mutated from a real spider! A four-issue guest-stint in *Marvel Two-In-One* (#30–#33, August–November 1977) ended with the now-heroic Spider-Woman learning she actually had a different backstory....

Spider-Woman's "true" origin was revealed in *Spider-Woman* #1 (April 1978). Jessica Drew learned that she had been exposed to radioactive uranium while a child, and that her scientist father had injected her with an experimental serum made of irradiated spider's blood to cure her. Put in cryogenic stasis, Jessica aged slowly, and was later released. Jessica discovered that she could fire bioelectric "venom blasts," had the ability to stick to walls, had superhuman strength and speed, was immune to most toxins, and could secrete pheromones that made men desire her and women fear her. Her red-and-yellow costume also had a pair of glider wings that allowed her to approximate flying.

In the *Spider-Woman* comic book series, Drew lived for a while in Los Angeles, and became known to the public as a superpowered bounty hunter. She faced villains such as the sixth-century sorceress Morgan le Fay, Gypsy Moth, the Brothers Grimm, Viper, and others. Eventually, she moved to San Francisco and became a private detective as well. Along the way, Drew romanced S.H.I.E.L.D. agent Jerry Hunt, and worked with both wheelchair-bound criminologist Scotty McDowell and a dark hero named the Shroud.

After a rotating series of writers, including Michael Fleisher, Chris Claremont, and Ann Nocenti, *Spider Woman* was a muddled mess. Her powers were faltering, her supporting cast had changed numerous times, and her origin had been revised and expanded upon until it confused even longtime fans. *Spider-Woman* ended at issue #50 (June 1983), with a story that appeared to have her body killed, her astral self trapped in limbo, and all memory of her erased from the Marvel universe.

The ending of *Spider-Woman* was an odd choice for so visible a character. After Filmation created an animated heroine named Web Woman for the CBS animated series *Tarzan and the Super 7* (1978–1980), Depatie-Freleng Enterprises (DFE Films) sold ABC a *Spider-Woman* animated series. Debuting September 22, 1979, the show lasted one season, with sixteen episodes (including a Spider-Man guest appearance). The show followed comic book history very loosely. Jessica Drew was now the publisher of *Justice Magazine*, using her enhanced spider-sense to warn her of dangers around the world. Spinning in a circle like Wonder Woman, Drew (the voice of Joan Van Ark) would become Spider-Woman and fly to danger. Often, she would also have to rescue *Justice* photographer/love interest, Jeff Hunt, and her smarty-pants nephew, Billy Drew; they would travel to sites of trouble in the Justice Jet Copter. The heroine faced mummies, Vikings, Dracula, and a few comic book adversaries such as Kingpin and Dormammu. While *Spider-Woman* was on the air, she enjoyed a healthy licensing run, appearing on T-shirts, costumes, underwear, school supplies, stickers, Slurpee cups, and more. Once the show disappeared, her appearances on licensed products grew less frequent.


SPIDER WOMAN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
35¢
1
02615
TO KNOW HER IS TO FEAR HER!
THE SPIDER-WOMAN
1ST SPECTACULAR ISSUE!
NOW IN HER OWN BOOK! THE SUPER-HEROINE SENSATION THEY SAID COULDN'T BE DONE!
SPECIAL ORIGIN: ALL THE WORLD AGAINST HER!

Spider-Woman #1 © 1978 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Joe Sinnott.)

Jessica Drew didn't stay dead for long, thanks to the Avengers and Dr. Strange, who helped revive her in the comic books, even though she lost her powers in the process (*The Avengers* #240–#241, February–March 1984). Drew continued her life as a private detective in San Francisco, though she later worked in the East Asian city of Madripoor, a job which brought her into contact with Wolverine numerous times. In modern stories, Drew has worked alongside and even mentored her counterparts, and it appears that some of her superpowers have returned.

The second Spider-Woman was Julia Carpenter, a single mother from Denver, Colorado. First glimpsed in *Marvel Super-Heroes Secret Wars* #6 (October 1984), this Spider-Woman wore a black costume, with white boots and gloves, and a white spider-symbol across her chest. Her powers—gained from secret exposure to spider venom by the evil Commission—included the ability to psionically stick to walls and ceilings, as well as to create strong "psi-webs" of energy. She also had enhanced strength and speed. She became a member of Freedom Force, a government-sponsored group that captured super-criminals, such as the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Spider-Woman aided the Avengers as well, and later joined Avengers West Coast and Force Works, but her career was cut short when a villainous opponent—also calling herself Spider-Woman—stole her powers. Prior to starring in *Avengers West Coast* and *Force Works,* Carpenter appeared in her own four-part *Spider-Woman* miniseries (November 1993–February 1994). She also appeared as one of the semi-regular characters in the syndicated 1994–1996 series *Iron Man,* part of Marvel Films and New World Entertainment's animated *The Marvel Action Hour.*

The third heroine to wear the Spider-Woman mantle was actually a teen girl named Martha "Mattie" Franklin. Taking her father's place in a mystical ceremony, tomboy Franklin gained great strength. A fan of Spider-Man, Franklin took on the name Spider-Woman, until she lost her powers to Charlotte Witter, an evil woman who was aided by Doctor Octopus in stealing the powers of all three Spider-Women. Franklin eventually stole the powers back, gaining her immediate predecessor's powers and more—flight, super strength, venom blasts, psionic webbing, psychic powers, and adhesion—in the process. Franklin faced villains such as Shadrac, Nighteyes, and Flesh and Bones in the third *Spider-Woman* series, which lasted eighteen issues (July 1999–December 2000). Franklin turned up in the same *Alias* storyline (#16–#21, January–June 2003) as Drew, where it was discovered that she was addicted to drugs, and that her pusher was using her blood to give his own drugs a super-boost.

In recent years, Jessica Drew has returned to her Spider-Woman identity and joined the New Avengers (and later the 2010 version of the Avengers). Julia Carpenter also regained her superpowers and took the name Arachne. When Madame Web was dying, she transferred her precognitive powers to Carpenter, who has become the new Madame Web. However, Mattie Franklin was recently killed by Sasha Kravinoff, the wife of Spider-Man's enemy, the original Kraven the Hunter.

Although she does not bear the name Spider-Woman yet, one girl in an alternate Marvel future might one day take on that name. In a not-too-distant future, Peter Parker has retired his life as Spider-Man to live with his wife, Mary Jane, and daughter, May Parker. Shortly after May exhibits signs of superstrength and speed, Peter is forced into a battle against the Green Goblin's vindictive grandson. Learning her father's secret, May takes one of his spare costumes and web shooters and battles the Goblin, saving her father's life and embarking on a career as Spider-Girl. First appearing in *What If?* #105 (February 1998), and created by writer Tom DeFalco and artist Ron Frenz, May garnered her own series debut in *Spider-Girl* #1 (October 1998). In the ensuing years, she has fought old-time spider-villains such as Venom, as well as new and updated villains such as Dragon King, Mr. Nobody, Crazy Eight, Spyral, and Raptor. Although the *Spider-Girl* series was on the brink of cancellation many times since, a vociferous fan base repeatedly rallied for the series and saved it, making it the longest-running solo series starring a female character in Marvel history. But Spider-Girl's saga finally concluded, at least temporarily, in *Spider-Girl: The End* (2010), written by DeFalco. A new character, Anya Corazon, alias Arana, who exists in the present-day Marvel universe, has recently adopted the name Spider-Girl. —*AM & PS*

The Spirit

In the early days of comic books, aspiring artists could look to Lou Fine's work on the *Black Condor* for tips on anatomy, to Jack Kirby's *Captain America* for excitement, and to Bob Kane's *Batman* for mood. For storytelling, drama, inventiveness, characterization, and pacing, they turned to one of the medium's true innovators, Will Eisner, and his legendary newspaper feature, *The Spirit.* Eisner came into comic books in the mid-1930s, and together with Jerry Iger, created one of the first packaging firms—the Eisner/Iger studio—producing comics for the many companies entering the nascent field. Along with Fiction House and Fox, one of the studio's clients was Quality Comics, and it was Quality owner Everett "Busy" Arnold and the Register and Tribune Syndicate, who offered Eisner a partnership to produce for syndication a sixteen-page comic book insert for Sunday newspapers, which would compete with the increasingly popular superhero comics springing up in the wake of *Superman.* Eisner sold his half of Eisner and Iger, and from early 1940 to 1942 Eisner and his new studio created a host of features for such Quality titles as *National, Smash, Blackhawk, Uncle Sam,* and *Military Comics,* as well as the ground-breaking newspaper section, *The Spirit.*

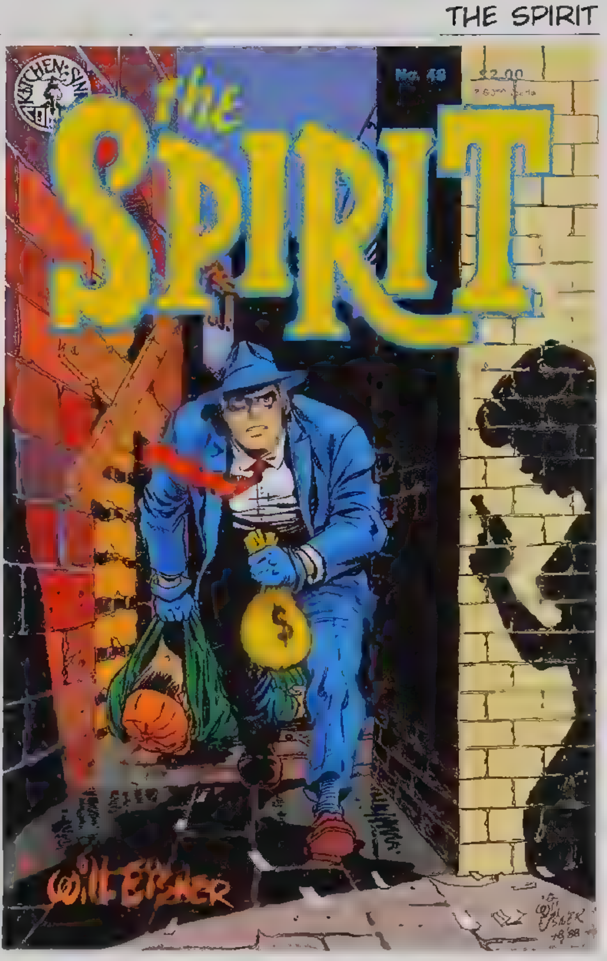
The Spirit was marketed through the Des Moines Register and Tribune Syndicate, and the feature was eventually sold to approximately twenty newspapers, reaching a readership of 5 million. *The Spirit* section itself was a separate, sixteen-page, coverless insert, consisting of a lead seven- or eight-page *Spirit* strip by Eisner, and two backup strips: *Lady Luck* (a detective feature by Chuck Mazoujian) and *Mr. Mystic* (a magician created by Bob Powell). The Spirit himself appeared in a daily newspaper strip from 1941 to 1944, and on-air in a short-lived radio show.

Appearing in June 1940, the first Spirit section introduced readers to the dashing private detective and criminologist Denny Colt, who is given a tip-off about mad scientist and all-round bad guy, Dr. Cobra, by his curmudgeonly friend, Central City Police Commissioner Eustace Dolan. Colt tracks down Cobra to catacombs beneath Chinatown but is accidentally drenched by a strange chemical. When Dolan and the police find him later, he is pronounced dead at the scene and buried in Wildwood Cemetery. However, when Colt shows up two days later at Dolan's police headquarters office, Colt reveals that the liquid had merely induced a temporary state of suspended animation. The newly resurrected Colt decides to let the world carry on believing in his demise as a cover for his pursuit of the mad doctor, under the guise of "The Spirit." With Dolan in tow, and donning a blue business suit, gloves, hat, and domino mask as a "costume," the Spirit finally tracks down Cobra, who dies in a hail of bullets. Afterward, the hero decides to stay "dead," declaring, "There are criminals and crimes beyond the reach of the police, but the Spirit can reach them."

Arnold and the Syndicate had wanted a superhero to rival Superman, but Eisner had dreams of creating a more complex strip for the older, sophisticated newspaper readership, one that was not cut from the same superhero cloth as the Man of Steel. Eisner's compromise was to give the Spirit a small mask, covering his eyes, and a uniform (of sorts)—a white, long-sleeved shirt, blue suit, fedora hat, and gloves—which was (almost) ever-present over the feature's twelve-year existence. With his de facto costume and dual identity, though no superpowers of which to speak, the Spirit became one of the first detective heroes to stick with audiences. Over the strip's first few weeks, Eisner introduced the hero's slightly macabre hideout—a well-appointed laboratory (for his clever inventions, such as smoke pellets and the short-lived car and plane) underneath Wildwood Cemetery—and the strip's colorful supporting cast. Principal among these were Commissioner Dolan's beautiful, blonde daughter Ellen, whose main goal in life appeared to be to marry the Spirit, and Ebony White, a plucky, young black cabbie, who soon became the hero's driver, comic foil, and *de facto* sidekick.

In its first few years, the feature was a more or less a traditional detective comic, albeit one laced with humor and the sort of energy found only in the comic books, but what set it apart from its rivals were Eisner's sophisticated storytelling, his inventiveness, and his ability to cram a witty, intelligent whodunit into seven pages. A lifelong fan of the movies (counting the films of Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, and Man Ray among his influences), Eisner played around with "camera angles," page layouts and pacing, and changing panel shapes, sizes, and viewpoints to affect how his audience read the strip. If he wanted to slow a sequence down or speed it up, he had the visual tricks to do it; to a large extent he was inventing the visual language of the medium as he drew, and inspiring generations to come in the process. Eisner's 1985 book, *Comics and Sequential Art,* is still the definitive word on how to draw comics. An example of his playful inventiveness was the way in which, on his splash pages, he would spell out the word "Spirit" on bits of paper blowing in the breeze, on shop signs, in puddles, on the bars of a window, on steps, or in countless other ways.

Soon after America entered World War II, Eisner was drafted, and for the duration of the war the strip was handled by Quality staffers such as William Woolfolk, Manly Wade Wellman, and Bill Millard on scripts, and Jack Cole and Lou Fine on artwork. It was still immaculately crafted but lacked the spark of genius that Eisner brought with him, a spark that was resolutely rekindled on his return in late 1945. After a couple of episodes that employed penciler John Spranger, Eisner really hit his stride in the late 1940s, fashioning a succession of dazzlingly witty and creative stories. His years in the army had matured him as an artist, revealing a more fluid, cartoon-influenced style that delighted in creating memorable characters and atmospheric action sequences. Where the prewar episodes had starred a succession of matinée villains, such as the Black Bow and Mr. Midnight, the later Spirit stories featured a more picaresque array of protagonists. Together with his increasingly influential new assistant Jules Feiffer (later a legendary cartoonist for *The Village Voice* and *The New Yorker*), Eisner explored the lives of Central City's losers, con-men, petty criminals, weirdoes, outsiders, and corrupt officials, who rejoiced in such names as Bottles McTopp, Stuffer Balot, Snagg Debbin, P. T. Bumble, Tempus J. Fujit, Sven Galli, Stud Sharpe, and Rattsy Trapp. That is not to say that Eisner had abandoned arch-villains entirely, however; two recurring foes were the eccentric Mr. Carrion (with his pet buzzard Julia), and the mysterious Octopus, whose face was never seen but whose identifying trademark was his two purple gloves with three white stripes.



The Spirit #48 © 1988 Will Eisner. (Cover art by Will Eisner.)

More often than not, the Spirit's most memorable opponents were women—*femmes fatales* of the deadliest, most seductive variety. Inspired by such movie sirens as Lauren Bacall, Ava Gardner, and Bette Davis, Eisner fashioned a wildly entertaining parade of pouting assassins, including Nylon Rose, Dulcet Tone, Sparrow Fallon, Powder Pouf, Plaster of Paris, Autumn Mews, Thorne Strand, Flaxen Weaver, and Sand Saref. The Spirit's female foes were as likely to kiss him as try to kill him and, indeed, his first significant foe—Silk Satin—had been his childhood friend when they ran together in Central City's Slum Gulley. Satin eventually renounced her life as a thief, but less repentant was the man-eating P'Gell. Named in honor of Paris' notorious Pigalle district, P'Gell had left a string of wealthy and deceased husbands in her wake, and sported lips that would have been the envy of Jessica Rabbit. In one of the strip's most memorable lines, she introduced herself with the immortal announcement: "I am P'Gell and this is not a story for little boys."

Another example of Eisner's postwar creativity was the expansion and development of the series' supporting cast. Commissioner Dolan, Ebony White, and Ellen became integral, witty elements of the feature, rather than mere plot devices to rescue, or be rescued by, its hero. Indeed, in many stories Eisner used the "crime of the week" as a hook on which to hang the exploration of his characters' personalities, rather than as the stories' focal point. Ellen became more than just a would-be spouse and ultimately became Central City's mayor, while Dolan softened to become the Spirit's friend and confidant. For contemporary readers, White was more problematical. While he was a brave and fearless companion for the Spirit, he was also rather too broadly caricatured; his Southern black dialogue ("Yassuh, Mr. Spirit Boss!") and stereotyped features became decidedly un-politically correct. Although he was always well intentioned, Eisner eventually bowed to the trend and replaced Ebony with the less controversial—and Anglo—Sammy, Willum, and PS (three kids straight out of the popular kid group, the Little Rascals).

Eisner had always prided himself on being as much a businessman as an artist (his studio had already made him financially secure by the age of twenty-five), and by the early 1950s, his outside interests had largely curtailed his involvement in the Spirit, leaving it in the hands of his studio. During these years, Eisner was aided by such notable artists and writers as Jules Feiffer, Wally Wood, and Tex Blaisdell. In late 1952, the feature was finally abandoned. But that was not to be the last anyone saw of the character. Busy Arnold had begun reprinting *Spirit* stories in *Police Comics* as early as 1942, and added a regular *Spirit* title in 1944. Both of these titles disseminated *Spirit* stories to comics fans for the rest of that decade. Despite the feature's newspaper demise, Fiction House reprinted vintage tales in their own *Spirit* comic from 1952 to 1954, and IW Comics released its own title a few years later. Harvey Comics introduced a new generation of fans to the Spirit in 1966, but its revival only lasted two issues despite some new Spirit additions from Eisner himself. However, the 1970s proved to be more receptive to the character, as first Kitchen Sink Press and then Warren Publishing Company revived him.

The Warren magazines reprinted up to ten classic adventures from the postwar period in each issue, topping them off with lavishly painted covers. After sixteen issues, Kitchen Sink once again took over the title, going on to print Spirit stories for the next sixteen years. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Spirit stories could be found in black-and-white magazines, lavish hardbacks, and a regular, full-color comic that ran for almost 100 issues. In addition, the masked hero entered into television, for the first time, when a pilot telefilm was produced and aired on ABC in July 1986, starring Sam Jones in the title role. By the time of Kitchen Sink's collapse in the late 1990s, almost every *Spirit* story had been reprinted—some many times—and Eisner had assumed the role of comics' great genius. After more than twenty years of publishing instructional comics for industry, schools, and the military, Eisner introduced a succession of well-received graphic novels, none of which starred the Spirit, but all of which intended to develop comic books as a mature medium.

For the many reprint series, Eisner drew literally hundreds of new covers but always resisted the temptation of drawing new *Spirit* stories, preferring to concentrate on his graphic novels. However, in 1997 Kitchen Sink finally persuaded him to let other, contemporary creators produce new Spirit tales—the first in decades. With such talents as Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, and Dave Gibbons, the series promised much, but despite the high level of craft on show, the results lacked the spark of the originals. In the 2000s, DC Comics has taken up Kitchen Sink's mantle as Spirit publisher, releasing a series of hardback "archives" volumes, reprinting in series the entire run of stories.

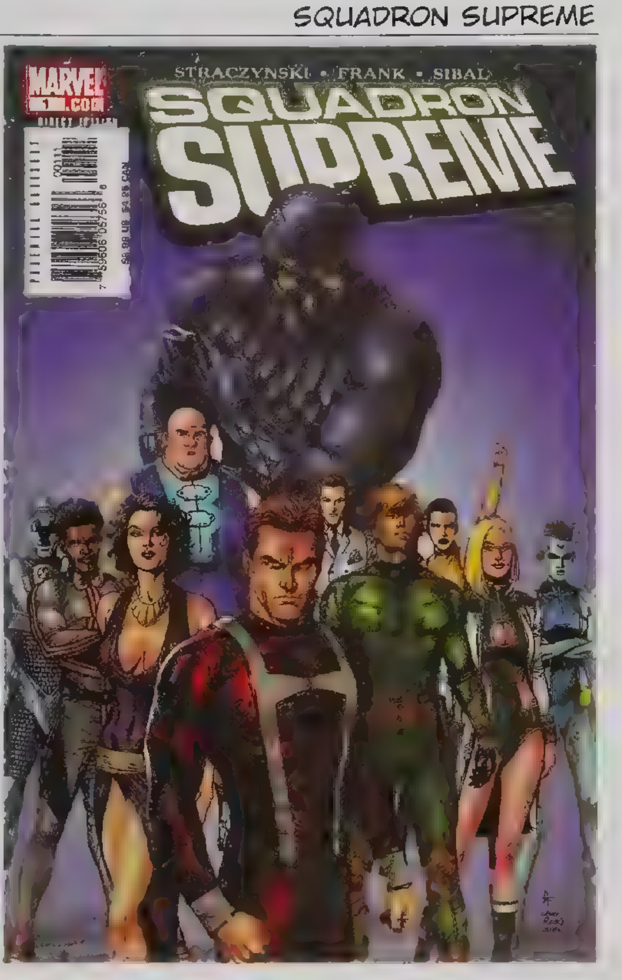
Will Eisner's final work was writing and drawing a story in which the Spirit met novelist Michael Chabon's superhero creation, the Escapist, published in Dark Horse's *Michael Chabon Presents The Amazing Adventures of the Escapist* #6 (April 2005). Will Eisner passed away on January 3, 2005, at the age of 87.

DC Comics published the one-shot comic book *Batman/The Spirit* (January 2007), written by Jeph Loeb and drawn by Darwyn Cooke, in which the two iconic heroes met. In the following month, DC began publishing a monthly *The Spirit* comic book series, set in the present day, initially written and drawn by Cooke. The team of Sergio Aragones and Mark Evanier took over as writers in 2008, with art by Mike Ploog, Paul Smith, and others. This series came to an end in 2009.

Frank Miller, the renowned comics writer and artist (*Batman: The Dark Knight Returns, Daredevil, Sin City*), directed and wrote *The Spirit* live action movie that Lionsgate released in 2008. Gabriel Macht starred in the title role, and the cast included Samuel L. Jackson as the Octopus (whose face was shown in the film), Scarlett Johansson as Silken Floss, Eva Mendes as Sand Saref, and Sarah Paulson as Ellen Dolan. Reflecting Miller's sensibility far more than Eisner's, the film was a critical and commercial disappointment.

However, Eisner's *Spirit* comics retain their influence and artistic power. In spite of its origins in the transient world of newspapers, the Spirit has become one of the most reprinted series in comics history and has secured its place as one of the medium's cornerstones. —*DAR*

Squadron Supreme



Squadron Supreme #1 © 2006 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Simone Bianchi.)

Marvel's Squadron Supreme began as an inside joke about DC's Justice League of America. In *The Avengers* #69 (October 1969), writer Roy Thomas and artist Sal Buscema introduced a new team of supervillains, the Squadron Sinister, consisting of Hyperion, Nighthawk, the Whizzer (not to be confused with the similarly named Golden Age hero), and Doctor Spectrum, who were parodies of Justice League members Superman, Batman, the Flash, and Green Lantern, respectively.

Subsequently, in *The Avengers* #85 (February 1971), Thomas and Sal's brother, artist John Buscema, sent members of the Avengers to a parallel Earth (known as Earth-712), which had its own versions of Hyperion, Nighthawk, the Whizzer, and Doctor Spectrum. There these four were members of a superhero team called the Squadron Supreme. Thomas, John Buscema, and later writers and artists created other Squadron members, including Power Princess (based on Wonder Woman), Amphibian (Aquaman), Arcanna (Zatanna), Blue Eagle (alias American Eagle and Cap'n Hawk, based on Hawkman), Golden Archer (alias Hawkeye, based on Green Arrow), Lady Lark (alias Skylark, based on Black Canary), Nuke (Firestorm), the Skrullian Skymaster (Martian Manhunter), and Tom Thumb (the Atom). The Squadron Supreme continued to appear as guest stars in *Avengers* and *Defenders*.

The late Mark Gruenwald wrote the *Squadron Supreme* maxi-series (September 1985 August 1986), a serious examination of the superhero genre. In this series, the Earth has been devastated as a result of alien attack. The Squadron assumes control of the United States to implement their "Utopia Program," designed to solve the nation's ills. Gruenwald shows how, despite the Squadron's good intentions, their dictatorship inevitably becomes morally corrupt (for example, by brainwashing criminals), and Nighthawk, leading a superhero team called the Redeemers, finally overthrows the Squadron's rule.

Writer J. Michael Straczynski and artist Gary Frank created a different version of the Squadron, set on a different parallel Earth (Earth-31916), in the comics series *Supreme Power,* whose first issue was cover-dated January 2001. This version of the Squadron worked for the United States government. Among the various differences between the two versions, Stanley Stewart, the Flash counterpart in the Earth-712 Squadron, is a white man called the Whizzer, whereas the Earth-31916 Squadron's Stewart is an African American called the Blur. The two versions of the Squadron Supreme met in Marvel's *Ultimate Power* maxi-series (2006–2008). Squadron members Hyperion, Nighthawk, and Power Princess have appeared in an episode of Marvel's animated television series *The Superhero Squad Show.* —PS

Starman

Starman is an interesting example of a character that was initially considered a relative failure, but that has, after a very long wait, achieved critical success. Starman was dreamed up by DC Comics as something of a successor to Superman, and the company launched him with much fanfare in 1941, through full-page advertisements in their comics, a cover and lead slot in *Adventure Comics* #61, and membership in their top-selling *Justice Society of America* strip. Starman's creators were among the company's best: Sandman and Dr. Fate creator Gardner Fox, and artist Jack Burnley, the first person to draw both Batman and Superman outside of their creators' studios. Even Starman's powers—flight and strength—and costume were similar to those of Superman, although the costume had different colors and a hood. And still the strip never quite caught on.

Starman was wealthy American astronomer Theodore ("Ted") Knight, who had constructed a Gravity Rod (a.k.a. Cosmic Rod) that could harness the energy of the stars and effectively give him almost unlimited powers, including the ability to fly, create energy fields, and melt steel. Fox, and later writer Alfred Bester (the noted science fiction author), peopled the strip with a fine selection of villains, including Electron, Dr. Droog, and their star rogue, the Mist, who coated himself (and his henchmen) with an invisibility paint, leaving only his head eerily visible. Burnley was by some margin the best draftsman at DC Comics, and, as a 2002 reprinting of all his Starman strips has shown, the old episodes still look impressive today. Yet the strip lacked individuality, and DC's high hopes for its success and impact were never realized. Starman's cover slot was soon usurped by Manhunter, Green Lantern replaced him in the Justice Society, and the strip was concluded in 1946 with a change to another top artist, Mort Meskin.

Like most Justice Society members, Starman featured in numerous *Justice League* guest appearances in the 1960s and 1970s, and coheadlined with Black Canary in two attractive 1965 issues of *The Brave and the Bold.* In fact, he had more adventures in the revived Justice Society than he had had in the 1940s, and while writers were rarely able to develop his personality very much, he made a decent enough team player. In the revived *All Star Comics* in 1976, his Gravity Rod was temporarily requisitioned by the Star-Spangled Kid (who then turned it into a belt), but this device was short-lived. Throughout the 1980s, Starman was an occasional presence in the *All Star Squadron,* one issue of which finally gave him the proper origin that his creators had forgotten to write: It seems that he was inspired to become a hero after seeing Batman in action—an origin that some fans say was hardly worth waiting thirty years for!

In spite of their early disappointment, the DC creative team must have thought that Starman was too good a name to waste on a bit-part player, and since the 1970s they have periodically tried to pass the title on to another character—or, to be precise, five other characters (so far). The first of these (Starman number two) was a blue-skinned alien attired in a sort of disco-era jump suit who starred in *First Issue Special* #12 (1976); he was met with complete indifference by a bemused public. Starman number three, who ran throughout 1980 in *Adventure Comics*, was a futuristic superhero from another galaxy, and the strip featured art by Spider-Man's Steve Ditko. More successfully, the fourth Starman premiered in his own title toward the end of the 1980s and enjoyed four years of relative popularity, though, curiously, he is almost forgotten today. This incarnation was Will Payton, who somehow inherited immense powers (flight, strength, and the ability to change his features) siphoned off from the previous Starman. In an interesting twist, this Starman bumped into yet another one: David Knight, son of the now aged first Starman, who had taken on his father's mantle (or, rather, cape).

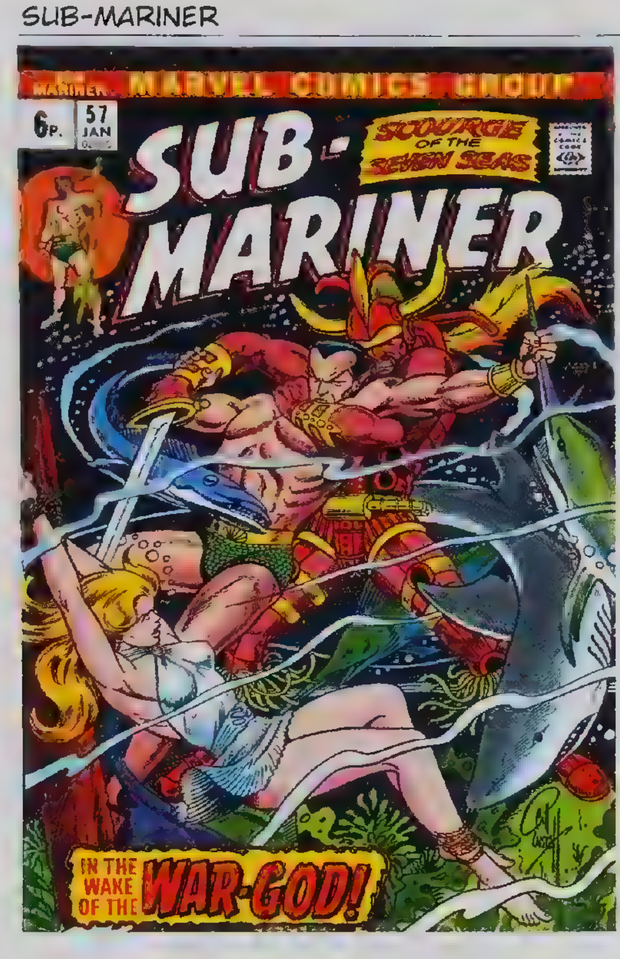
Readers next come across Knight in the first issue of yet another Starman project (in 1994), only to see him abruptly killed off and the Gravity Rod passed to his brother, Jack. This Starman (the sixth) was a reluctant superhero, preferring to rummage through junk for his antiques shop rather than tackle the likes of the Shade or the Mist (who perennially popped up in the comic). In a device that anticipated the post-millennial move away from costumes, he opted to go into battle wearing a trench-coat and goggles and, even more revolutionarily, he never bothered to adopt a secret identity. Much of the comic's appeal came from the interplay between two generations of superheroes, as father passed on advice to his novice son, and its quirky, reserved style gradually garnered the sort of praise that DC had hoped for back in the 1940s. Neophyte writer James Robinson became a star through his Starman scripts, and then surprised everyone by canceling the comic after eighty issues, declaring that he had told all the stories he wanted to tell. A unique ending to a unique comic.

The next member of the Starman dynasty is the young superheroine Courtney Whitmore. Courtney is the stepdaughter of Pat Dugan, who, as Stripesy, was the crime fighting partner of Sylvester Pemberton, the Golden Age superhero known as the Star-Spangled Kid. Created by writer Jerry Siegel (Superman's co-creator) and artist Hal Sherman, the Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy debuted in Action Comics #40 (September 1941). After Pemberton's death, Courtney became the second Star-Spangled Kid. Wearing an armored battlesuit called S.T.R.I.P. E. (Special Tactics Robotic Integrated Power Enhancer), Dugan accompanied Courtney on missions. Together they starred in the 1999–2000 comics series *Stars and S.T.R.I.P.E.*

When Jack Knight's Starman series ended, he gave his cosmic staff (an updated version of the gravity rod) to Whitmore, who renamed herself Stargirl. She is a member of the modern Justice Society of America. Actress Britt Irvin played Stargirl in the live action TV series *Smallville*. Stargirl has also appeared in animation in the television series *Justice League Unlimited* (with S.T.R.I.P.E.) and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. *—DAR & PS*

Sub-Mariner

Bill Everett's Sub-Mariner was the first of Timely/Marvel Comics' "big three" superheroes to be created, back in early 1939, and proved to be one of the company's most enduring characters, as well as being the first anti-hero in comics. The Sub-Mariner was dreamed up by Everett for a promotional comic called *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly*, packaged by Funnies Inc.—the art studio of which he was co-owner and art director. The project was not a success; only eight copies are known to exist, suggesting that few copies were ever circulated to the general public. However, later that year, when Funnies Inc. was contracted by pulp publisher Martin Goodman to package a comic, Everett recycled his original Sub-Mariner story, adding a short origin sequence, and so *Marvel Comics* #1 was born, hitting the newsstands in October 1939. The comic, co-starring the Human Torch, the Angel, and Ka-Zar (the latter two have no relation to their later namesakes), was retitled *Marvel Mys-*


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
6P. 57 JAN
SUB-MARINER
SCOURGE OF THE SEVEN SEAS
IN THE WAKE OF THE WAR-GOD!

Sub-Mariner #57 © 1973 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Bill Everett.)

tery Comics with its second issue, and soon became one of the nascent industry's best-selling books. At the time of the Sub-Mariner's creation in April 1939, the only costumed superhero on the stands was Superman, making Everett's character genuinely groundbreaking.

The Sub-Mariner's brief origin relates how explorer Leonard McKenzie leads a scientific expedition to the Antarctic, and during exploratory explosions on the ice shelf, he accidentally damages an undersea kingdom. The settlement (later christened Atlantis, inevitably) sends up one of its blue-skinned inhabitants, Princess Fen, to bargain with the men. She ends up having an affair with McKenzie, who nevertheless carries on with his dangerous experiments, killing most of the kingdom's inhabitants in the process (albeit unwittingly, it seems). It takes the Atlanteans twenty years to rebuild their numbers, but by 1939—led by the product of the union between McKenzie and Fen, Prince Namor the Sub-Mariner—they are ready to unleash their wrath on the unsuspecting surface-dwellers. The half-human Namor was pale-skinned and sported winged feet, pointed ears, and a somewhat triangular head. He possessed extraordinary speed and strength (swimming 60 miles per hour and lifting 75 tons underwater) and could even fly out of water; however, he weakened after several hours of not being wet and needed to immerse himself at least once a week.

In his earliest *Marvel Mystery* tales, the Sub-Mariner was to prove a menace to humankind in general, rampaging through cities and striking terror into American hearts (indeed the name Namor means "avenging son"), but he soon turned his attention elsewhere. In Spring 1941, he was given his own comic, in which the Nazis rashly attacked Atlantis, and for the rest of World War II Namor was to prove their nemesis, at least in those stories in which he was not pummeling his erstwhile co-star, the Human Torch. As the war progressed, he began to star in other Timely titles, including *USA, Daring, All Winners, The Human Torch,* and *All Select,* but by this point Everett was long gone, having been drafted in early 1942. Everett was a skilled, fluid artist with a genuine love of the sea, and though his successors (including Carl Pfeufer and Syd Shores) did not share that same enthusiasm, the strip thrived in his absence.

The postwar Sub-Mariner was an altogether tamer beast; since having defeated the Axis hordes, he seemed to regard himself as a de facto American, helping the police and hanging out with the beautiful Betty Dean, while rarely returning to Atlantis. As sales began to decline, the company introduced his shapely cousin, Namora, as a sort of companion-in-arms (first appearing in *Marvel Mystery* #82 in 1947) and she was soon spun off into her own short-lived comic. More importantly, Everett returned to the strip that year a much improved artist, but even he could not halt the industry-wide slump, and by mid-1949, both *Marvel Mystery* and *Sub-Mariner* were canceled.

By late 1953, Marvel (now known as Atlas) decided to try out the superhero genre once more, and following a couple of issues of *Young Men,* all three of the company's principal heroes were given their own comics again. Whereas *Cap-*

tain America and the *Human Torch* proved to be short-lived, a proposed Sub-Mariner television series (which never materialized) persuaded Martin Goodman to keep Namor's title afloat for ten issues. With Everett (and Namora) back on board, it was as if nothing had changed, and all of the 1950s Sub-Mariner yarns are a joy, particularly since Everett had improved still more, marrying a winningly cartoony touch with delicate, detailed renderings. There was also less of the rampant commie-bashing prevalent in the other revivals. Barely a year after the final issue of the series (#42, 1955), DC Comics brought out *Showcase* #4, starring the Flash, meaning that Marvel only just missed out on starting the big superhero revival of the Silver Age (1956–1969). As it was, readers had to wait until 1962 to enjoy the Sub-Mariner again.

The action in *Fantastic Four* #4 opens with the latter-day Torch (in his unrelated Johnny Storm version) burning the stubble off a Bowery bum and discovering the Sub-Mariner underneath. In a piece of retro-fitting from later in the decade, it was revealed that a character called Destiny had destroyed most of Atlantis and that Namor had just survived, but he was stricken with amnesia. When his memory was restored, the newly angry Subby went on the rampage, swearing revenge on humankind—much as he had done in his early days. For the next couple of years, he was a regular (unwelcome) guest in the pages of *Fantastic Four* (where he developed a crush on the Invisible Girl) and popped up all over the Marvel universe. After a particularly memorable rampage through New York City, in *Daredevil* #7, it became obvious to Marvel that Sub-Mariner was too strong a character to be wasted on occasional guest shots, and he was finally given his own series again.

Namor's new berth was *Tales to Astonish.* In issue #70 (1965) he ousted the moribund Giant-Man strip, and under the guidance of writer Stan Lee and artist Gene Colan, it was a handsome feature. As in the 1940s, the company found it hard to sustain a strip centered on an outright villain, and so the feature concentrated on Namor's regal side in Atlantis. It introduced a supporting cast of love interest Lady Dorma; the steadfast, bearded vizier Vashti; and the plotting warlord Krang. Within a few issues, Namor had graduated from prince to king. In 1967, Bill Everett once again (temporarily) returned to his favorite son, though his hard-living lifestyle had taken its toll, and critics generally agree he was not at his best. Nevertheless, a year later the Sub-Mariner was promoted to his own title and began a successful run of more than seventy issues.

The new title introduced a new creative team—Roy Thomas (on scripts) and John Buscema (on art for the first year)—and a dynamic new approach. Indeed, the early issues were almost underwater sword-and-sorcery stories. The comic soon settled down to a more traditional superhero look and introduced a succession of fishy villains, including Tiger Shark, Stingray, Commander Kraken, and Orka the Human Killer Whale, in addition to Marvel's all-purpose underwater thug, Attuma. The 1970s fully re-established the Sub-Mariner at the heart of the company, and he also starred in *The Defenders, The Invaders,* and *Supervillain Team-up.* In his own comic he suffered a number of tragedies, including the death of Lady Dorma, the loss of his throne, and the departure of Thomas (after four years). On the plus side, he tracked down his long-lost father (last seen in *Marvel Comics* #1) and was reunited with his (other) creator, Bill Everett, one last time.

By 1972, Everett had conquered his personal demons and was once again at his quirky, intricate best, and he immediately introduced a new element into the strip in the form of the perky, teenage Namorita, daughter of the long-forgotten (and now regrettably deceased) Namora. Everett's tenure was to be brief (from #50 to #61), and he died four pages into a new episode. By the decade's end, all the Sub-Mariner's various titles either had been canceled or (in the case of *The Defenders*) had written him out of their lineup. The 1980s were an even less promising era for Subby, reducing the character to the status of "villain of the issue" in scattered *Fantastic Four* numbers; why the public had tired of him remains something of a mystery.

A new decade brought an old fan—industry favorite John Byrne—a new comic called *Namor* (sixty-two issues between 1990 and 1995), and a move in a darker direction. Much like Aquaman, his DC Comics counterpart, Namor became caught up in the trend toward darker, harsher heroes, and he grew his hair long and sported a beard (never a good sign in comics). A revival of his romance with the Invisible Girl (now Invisible Woman) went nowhere, but he did gain a son along the way, courtesy of the previously villainous Llyra. The same year that the *Namor* comic was initiated also saw the birth of a new superteam, the *New Warriors*, starring Namorita. The *New Warriors* was a far more lighthearted venture and, against the perceived wisdom of the day, proved more popular than *Namor*'s supposedly more cutting-edge nihilism.

By the start of the new century, both Namor and Namorita were homeless once more, although Namor has starred in comics series launched in 2007, 2008, and 2010, and made prominent guest appearances in many others in recent years. He was also recently revealed to be a member of the Illuminati, a small council of superheroes (also including Captain America, Doctor Strange, Iron Man, Medusa, Mr. Fantastic, and Professor X) who deal with major threats to Earth. Namorita was killed in the explosion that led to the Marvel superheroes' *Civil War* (2006–2007), but thanks to a time paradox, has returned to life in the present. Even her mother Namora, long thought to be dead, has turned up alive and is now a member of the superhero team called the Agents of Atlas. —*DAR & PS*

Super Friends

For thirteen years, they protected the Earth from within their headquarters, the Hall of Justice. If they had kept their title the same, ABC and Hanna-Barbera's group of superheroes would have been among the longest-running animated series in history; however, the *Super Friends* got new series titles on a regular basis. The core team always remained Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Robin, and Aquaman, although multiple other heroes and sidekicks often joined them for adventures.

Superheroes had fallen out of favor with networks as the 1970s began, but in 1972, a pair of CBS *New Scooby-Doo Movies*, with guest stars Batman and Robin, and two episodes of ABC's *The Brady Kids*, which guest-starred Superman and Wonder Woman, changed the minds of development executives at ABC. Soon, the alphabet network commissioned Hanna-Barbera to create a new supergroup to entertain on Saturday mornings, but they wanted the adventures to be moralistic and nonviolent. Hanna-Barbera picked five of DC Comics' top heroes—Aquaman was included over Flash or Green Lantern because he had already had his own animated series—and saddled them with teen sidekicks Wendy, Marvin, and Wonder Dog. Simple, but elegant, designs by comics master Alex Toth gave all the characters a dynamic flair.

Super Friends debuted on September 8, 1973, with an adventure in which the heroes had to stop energy thieves who came from an energy-depleted planet. Of the sixteen episodes produced, other adventures included guest-stars Green Arrow, Flash, and Plastic Man, and saw the Super Friends battle a super-computer called G.E.E.C., dastardly polluters, and alien balloon people. Although *Super Friends* did well in the ratings—and actually received primetime promotion—it was dropped from the air in August 1975, only to return again in February 1976. Half-hour edited versions of the shows ran from December 1976 to September 1977.

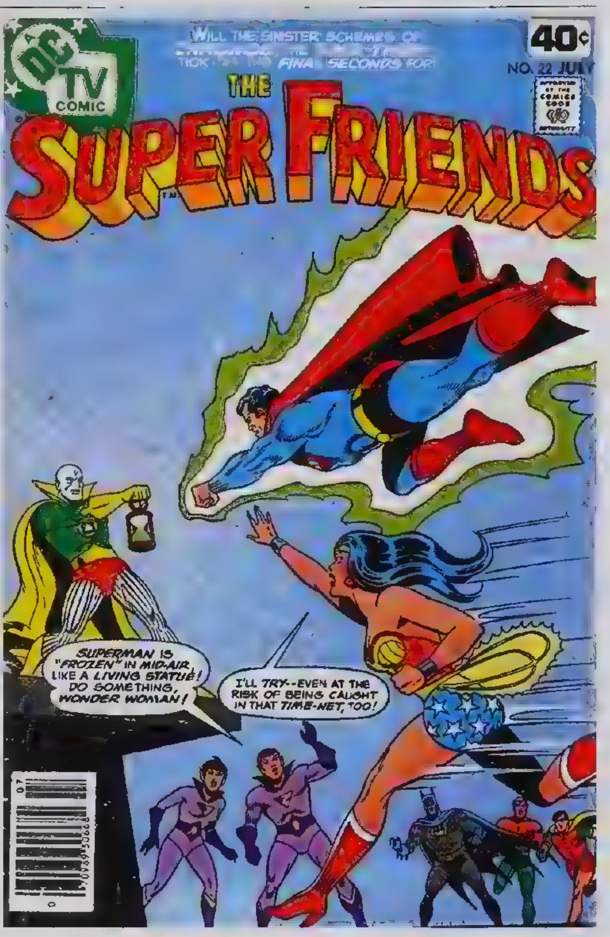
The first title change for the series came on September 10, 1977, when *The All New Super Friends Hour* debuted. This version altered the format, showing four adventures over the hour (one half-hour story, and three mini-adventures). Interspersed between each story were Safety Tips, three-part Decoder Clues games, and alternating Crafts or Magic Tricks short segments. The other major change for the series was that Wendy, Marvin, and Wonder Dog were dumped for new sidekicks: alien teens from Exxor named Zan and Jayna, and their space monkey, Gleek. Zan and Jayna were the Wonder Twins, and when they pushed their fists together and yelled "Wonder Twin powers, activate!" Zan could form anything made of water or ice, and Jayna could become any animal from Earth or another planet.

The short stories tended to feature one or two characters teaming up to stop disasters or villains, and many of them guest-starred other heroes from the DC Comics universe: Hawkgirl, Hawkman, Rima the Jungle Girl, Green Lantern, Flash, and the Atom. Created for the series were the new multicultural heroes Black Vulcan (an African American man with electrical powers), Apache Chief (a Native American man who could grow to be a giant), and Samurai (an Asian man who could spin his lower torso into a tornado). The final of fifteen episodes also featured the first supervillain adapted from the comics: Hawkman's foe Gentleman Jim Craddock, the Gentleman Ghost.

On September 9, 1978, ABC debuted what would be the most popular incarnation of the series ever: *Challenge of the Super Friends*. In this series, the Super Friends were now regularly joined by Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Black Vulcan, Apache Chief, and Samurai, leaving Wonder Woman the sole female heroine (the Wonder Twins were gone for these stories). Fighting against them was the Legion of Doom, whose members included well-known comic-book villains Lex Luthor, Brainiac, Cheetah, the Riddler, the Scarecrow, Toyman, Sinestro, Black Manta, Captain Cold, Bizarro, Gorilla Grodd, Solomon Grundy, and Giganta. The Legion of Doom met in the Hall of Doom, a building that resembled Darth Vader's helmet and was built in a swamp.

Although the villains were out to conquer the world, and often caused major problems, they just as often escaped justice at the end of each half-hour adventure. When television's Standards and Practices arm objected, the Legion were caught in some episodes, only to be miraculously free the next week. Not only did the show feature many comics characters, several episodes also showcased the origins of the heroes and villains, including Superman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Lex Luthor, Giganta, and the Legion of Doom itself.

Since *Challenge of the Super Friends* was a one-hour show, and the Legion of Doom stories only took half that time, separate half-hour stories filled the rest of the hour. These sixteen stories *did* feature the Wonder Twins, fighting evil alongside the crew from the previous season's adventures. These stories were a little more cosmic in nature, with Mr. Mxyzptlk, Dracula, the Greek Gods, and dangers from Exxor, Krypton, and other planets stressing out the Super Friends. *Challenge* proved so popular that the show was expanded to ninety minutes from November 1978 to September 1979, with older reruns added in to fill the time.


WILL THE SINISTER SCHEMES OF
TICK ... FINAL SECONDS FOR
40¢
NO. 22 JULY
DC TV COMIC
THE SUPER FRIENDS
SUPERMAN IS "FROZEN" IN MID-AIR, LIKE A LIVING STATUE! DO SOMETHING, WONDER WOMAN!
I'LL TRY--EVEN AT THE RISK OF BEING CAUGHT IN THAT TIME-NET, TOO!

Super Friends #22 © 1979 DC Comics. (Cover art by Ramona Fradon.)

Another name change came in 1979, and the show became *The World's Greatest Super Friends*. Though the series was an hour, only eight new episodes were produced. Fantasy ruled these episodes as the heroes battled space knights of Camelon and the Frankenstein monster, took a trip to the Planet of Oz, and faced their evil *dopplegängers*. Gone were the extra heroes, though the Wonder Twins stuck around.

The 1980–1981 season saw a simplified title to *The Super Friends Hour*. Eight new half hour shows were produced, though each was split into a trio of seven-minute short stories. Eight new Safety Tips, Magic Tricks, and Crafts shorts were produced as well. The cast returned to its wider reach, as guest-stars Apache Chief, the Atom, Flash, Hawkman, Hawkgirl, Rima, and others stopped by to lend a helping hand. Villains included Mr. Mxyzptlk and Bizarro, in addition to non-comic-book menaces such as the Voodoo Vampire, the Termites from Venus, and the Incredible Crude Oil Monster.

Things got a bit complicated for the heroes over the next several years. In September 1981, the series was renamed *The Super Friends,* and more short adventures were produced (three per half-hour), adding a new Hispanic hero named El Dorado to the mix. Six new half-hours (eighteen stories) were produced and aired in the 1981–1982 season, but the 1982–1983 year featured all reruns. Eight more half-hours (twenty-four stories) were produced for the 1983–1984 season, they but did not air in the United States. Thus, for U,S. viewers, the 1983–1984 season was also all reruns.

Concurrent with a new line of action figures from Kenner, known as *Super Powers,* ABC and Hanna-Barbera changed the title of the series again with the September 8, 1984 episode. *Super Friends—The Legendary Super Powers Show* featured Superman, Batman, Robin, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Green Lantern, Flash, Hawkman, Atom, Black Vulcan, Apache Chief, Samurai, and the Wonder Twins. Also introduced into the stories was teen hero Firestorm.

The Legendary Super Powers Show started out as a thirty-minute series, but by December it had been expanded to an hour. The stories were either two separate eleven-minute tales, or a two-part storyline; in addition to eight new half-hours, two half-hours from the missing 1983–1984 episodes were also aired. Darkseid and others of Jack Kirby's Fourth World characters (Kalibak, Desaad, the Para-Demons) were the main antagonists, while familiar comic villains such as Brainiac, Mr. Mxyzptlk, Mirror Master, and Lex Luthor also bedeviled the heroes.

In September 1985, the series changed titles once again, losing its *Super Friends* connection once and for all as it was renamed to *The Super Powers Team: Galactic Guardians,* and the character designs were changed to reflect the templates, drawn by Jose Luis Garcia Lopez, in the *DC Comics Style Guide* for licensors. Eight more half-hours were produced, with some of them cited by fans as the best stories of the entire run.

While the team remained functionally the same, African American teen hero Cyborg was added to the mix, perhaps testing the waters for a proposed *Teen Titans* series, of which he would have been a part. Lex Luthor, Darkseid, Brainiac, and Bizarro were back to cause trouble, while newcomers the Royal Flush Gang (with Joker in tow) and Felix Faust appeared. But it was in an episode called "The Fear" that fans got a real "first"; it featured the first-ever time that Batman's origin had been told on television or film! Another story bucked television tradition and harkened back to a much-loved Silver Age (1956-1969) Man of Steel comic-book story: "The Death of Superman" was one of the rare cases that the word "death" ever appeared in an animation title.

Galactic Guardians ended its run on September 6, 1986, closing out thirteen seasons of the various *Super Friends* series. The show was later sent to syndication, then to USA Network (where all the missing 1983–1984 episodes were finally shown), and finally to Cartoon Network, where it resides today. Well-remembered by older fans, and embraced by younger viewers, *Super Friends* began a resurgence of popularity after the turn of the century. Cartoon Network produced newly animated promos featuring the characters (and brought back many of the original voice actors), and even featured Black Vulcan and Apache Chief on its *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law* series.

Justice League, the successor to *Super Friends,* began airing on Cartoon Network in November 2001. DC Comics launched a nostalgia-laden campaign in 2002, publishing the first of two *Super Friends* trade paperbacks, and following them later with action figures, posters, statues, and other limited edition materials. The Wonder Twins have shown up in recent years in the pages of *Extreme Justice* and *Young Justice,* and even Apache Chief was reborn as Manitou Raven in the pages of *JLA.* Warner Bros. also began to release *Challenge of the Super Friends* DVDs, to surprisingly high sales.

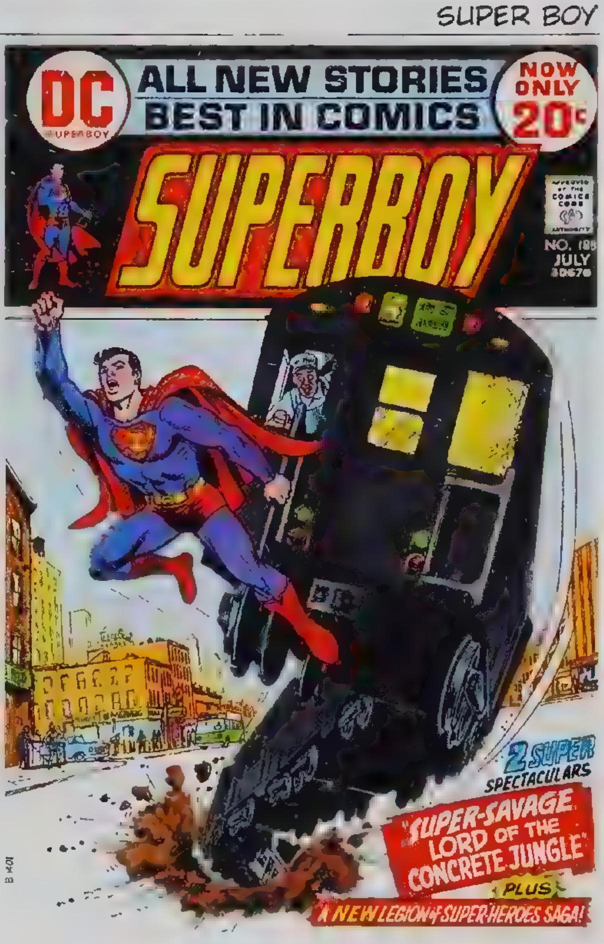
In 2007, the Justice League of America established a new public headquarters in Washington D.C., the Hall of Justice, named after the Super Friends' headquarters. The Wonder Twins, Zan and Jayna, appeared in a 2009 episode of the live action television series *Smallville,* played by David Gallagher and Allison Scagliotti. DC Comics launched a new *Super Friend*s comics series aimed at children in 2008, and sidekicks Wendy and Marvin entered official DC universe continuity in *Teen Titans* #34 (May 2006). *—AM & PS*

Superboy

Superman was approaching his seventh birthday in 1945, and he had proven himself a phenomenal sales success as the star of *Action Comics, World's Finest Comics,* and his own title. Beginning with *More Fun Comics* #101 (January–February 1945), publisher DC Comics found a new way to milk its Kryptonian cash cow—"The Adventures of Superman When He Was a Boy"—Superboy!

When Superman first took flight in *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938), creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster established that this "strange visitor from another planet" had delayed his crime-fighting career until adulthood, upon the death of his adopted Earth parents. Funny how the prospect of exploiting a lucrative franchise can inspire reinvention: With Superboy, Superman's origin was retrofitted to offer readers a pint-sized superhero. The Superboy series, backdated roughly a dozen years from the Man of Steel's adventures, took the hero who would one day protect the bustling city of Metropolis and plunked him down in a hick town, appropriately called Smallville. Enthusiastic younger readers made Superboy a hit, and the hero burst out of *More Fun* into the lead spot in *Adventure Comics* and his own long-running title.

The basic story of Superboy remained the same as Superman's: Childless Jonathan and Martha Kent discover a humanoid baby in a crashed rocketship and adopt him as their son, Clark, guiding him to use his otherworldly powers (flight, superstrength, invulnerability, superspeed, supervision, superhearing, and, yes, superbreath) to benefit humankind—but then the variations began. Superboy's blue-and-red suit was sewn by "Ma" Kent from the very blankets into which the infant was swaddled. He frolicked about the sky with another survivor of Krypton, his superdog Krypto. Lana Lang, not Lois Lane, was his headstrong female companion (and neighbor). Instead of an Arctic Fortress of Solitude, the Boy of Steel operated out of a secret headquarters underneath the Kents' modest home.



Superboy #188 © 1972 DC Comics. (Cover art by Nick Cardy.)

Initially, Superboy appeared to be a pre-teen, but before long the series writers made him a teenager at Smallville High School. Young Kent perfected his "mild-mannered" persona to deflect any suspicion of his S-chested identity, but that didn't fool nosy Lang, who spent years trying to prove that the boy next door was the Boy of Steel. Teenage Kent struck a more resonant chord with the readership than his adult counterpart: His angst closely mirrored the growing pains experienced by his read-

Michael Rosenbaum (left) as Lex Luthor and Tom Welling as a young Superman starred in the television series *Smallville*. (Warner Bros. TV / The Kobal Collection).

ership. While the writers expertly characterized young Kent, they rarely explored the Boy of Steel's immaturity with his superpowers—Superboy was essentially Superman in a smaller package.

By the 1960s, Superboy had developed a rogues' gallery including Bizarro, the Kryptonite Kid, and classmate-turned-evil-scientist Lex Luthor, who blamed Superboy for the permanent loss of his hair (!). He regularly encountered a bevy of young superfriends, most notably the Legion of Super-Heroes, a club of teen champions from a thousand years in the future. Youthful versions of a pre-Batman Bruce Wayne, Aquaman, Green Arrow, and Lois Lane even stopped by Smallville, as did the time-traveling Robin the Boy Wonder and a cadre of other crusading kids in one-shot appearances.

Superboy never matched the ubiquitous merchandising muscle of Superman, but a handful of items bearing his likeness have been produced over the years, from a model kit and board game in 1966, to an action-figure two-pack with Supergirl in 2002. On four occasions, the Boy of Steel has starred in television series: in *The Adventures of Superboy,* an unsold pilot (1960) starring Johnny Rockwell; in Filmation Studios' 1966 Superboy animated cartoon (part of *The New Adventures of Superman* series); in the live-action *Superboy* syndicated program (1988–1992), starring John Haymes Newton in season one and Gerard Christopher in the remaining three seasons; and in *Smallville,* the highly acclaimed live-action, teen-oriented, hour-long WB network drama that premiered in 2001 and updated the Superboy legend (sans costumed identity), with a young Clark Kent (Tom Welling) on a journey of super-discovery.

Superboy was expunged from DC Comics' continuity in 1986, in writer/artist John Byrne's *Man of Steel* miniseries, which re-established Superman's inaugural appearance as transpiring during the hero's adulthood. In the aftermath of DC's highly publicized "Death of Superman" storyline in 1992, a new Superboy—a cloned proxy for the deceased Man of Steel—was introduced in *Adventures of Superman* #500 (1993). Kryptonian DNA doesn't lend itself to replication, discovered the geneticists at Metropolis think tank Project Cadmus, so their test-tube titan was cloned from heritable matter from Paul Westfield, the head of Project Cadmus, and programmed to parrot Superman's powers. Superboy's abilities are accredited to "tactile telekinesis": He can fly, he is invulnerable, and he is strong like the Man of Steel, but he also commands the power to disassemble any object. After Superman returned from the grave, he accepted "The Kid" (as Superboy is often called) into his super-"family," bestowing upon him the Kryptonian name of Kon-El. Hip, brash, and fashion-conscious, this Superboy starred in a healthy run of his own title from 1994 to 2002, as well as the short-lived spinoff *Superboy and the Ravers*. Superboy was a member of Young Justice before settling, in the summer of 2003, into the roster of a revamped Teen Titans.

In *Teen Titans* Vol. 3 #1 (September 2003), it was revealed that Kon-El was not an altered clone of Project Cadmus head Paul Westfield, but was a hybrid of DNA from both Superman and his human nemesis Lex Luthor. Kon-El adopted a secret identity as Conner Kent.

The estate of the late Jerry Siegel attempted to gain control of the rights to Superboy, asserting that Siegel had proposed the character to DC in the 1940s, that DC had rejected Siegel's pitch, but then used the character anyway, without his permission. In 2006, a court awarded the rights to the Superboy name to the Siegel estate; DC then avoided using the Superboy name. Significantly, Kon-El was killed off in *Infinite Crisis* (2005–2006). However, in 2007 the previous court decision was reversed, in 2008 DC began using the Superboy name once more, and Kon-El returned from the dead in 2009.

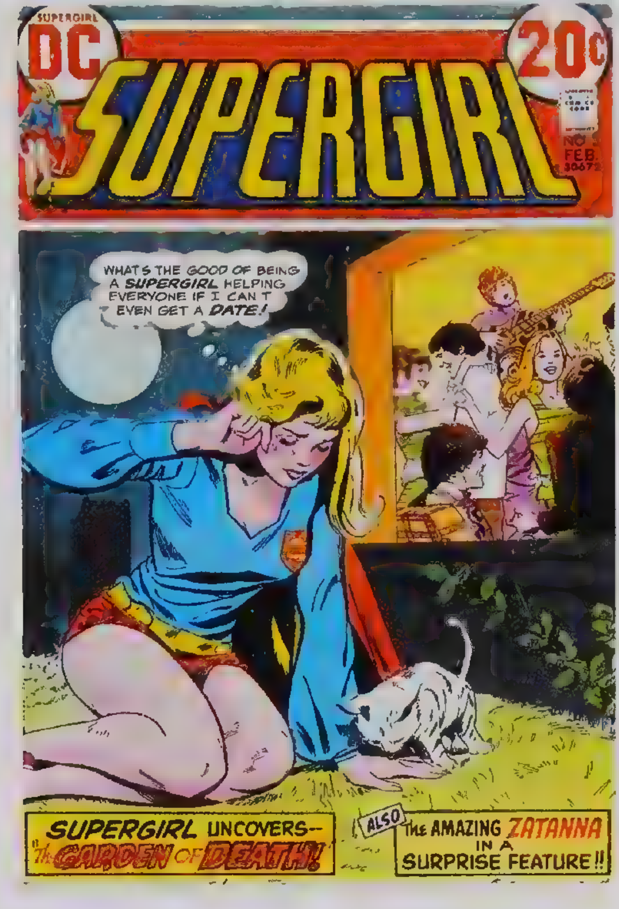
In 2011, *Smallville* wrapped after ten seasons, thus becoming both the longest running science fiction series and the longest running superhero series ever produced for American television. In the final moments of the last episode, Clark at last adopts the costume and identity of Superman and is shown flying. In September 2011, DC Comics began publishing a new monthly Superboy comic book starring Kon-El, written by Scott Lobdell and drawn by RB Silva. —*ME & PS*

Supergirl

"It ... uh ... must be an illusion!" stammers Superman as he witnesses "a youngster flying, dressed in a supercostume," zipping from a crashed spaceship. It's Supergirl, the cousin of Superman, arriving on Earth in *Action Comics* #252 (May 1959). Superman discovers that this ebullient, golden-haired teen is Kara, a survivor from his homeworld of Krypton. When the planet exploded years ago—the horrific event that led to baby Superman being sent to Earth—the entire megalopolis of Argo City survived, hurled from the explosion and existing on a chunk of planetary debris. As a meteor shower decimates the floating city and its populace, scientist Zor-El—brother of Jor-El, Superman's biological father—rockets his daughter Kara to Earth to join her cousin. Given the tragedy from which she has just emerged, Supergirl's giddiness seems rather callous, as she soars about in a blue-skirted version of Superman's uniform, but this was a time of innocence for publisher DC Comics' characters.

Superman concealed Kara's existence from the world, covertly instructing Supergirl on how to use her powers (slightly weaker versions of his own). Disguising herself with a brunette wig and taking the Earth name Linda Lee, Supergirl resided at an orphanage in the hamlet of Midvale, eventually being adopted by the Danvers family. After almost three years (in real time) of laboring in the shadows as her cousin's secret weapon, Supergirl was introduced to the world by Superman in a televised ticker-tape parade in *Action* #285 (February 1962).

Throughout the 1960s, Supergirl starred as the backup strip in *Action Comics*, sometimes cover-featured as a guest star to her top-tiered cousin. Unmistakably, the character was created as an attraction for young girl readers, and while most boys reading comics shunned DC's *Wonder Woman* title, they read Supergirl's stories since they shared space in *Action* with the immensely popular Man of Steel. Supergirl soon had her own supporting cast—Linda Lee Danvers' boyfriend Dick Malverne, her adopted parents, Streaky the Super-Cat, and Comet the Super-Horse, plus the


SUPERGIRL
DC
SUPERGIRL
20¢
NO. 3
FEB
30672
WHAT'S THE GOOD OF BEING A SUPERGIRL HELPING EVERYONE IF I CAN'T EVEN GET A DATE!
SUPERGIRL UNCOVERS-- "The GARDEN OF DEATH!"
ALSO The AMAZING ZATANNA IN A SURPRISE FEATURE!!

Supergirl #3 © 1973 DC Comics. (Cover art by Bob Oksner.)

thirtieth century's Legion of Super-Heroes, particularly member Brainiac 5, who carried a torch for the Girl of Steel—but the super-cousin herself never quite evolved past second-banana status. Her *Action* stories were lighthearted fluff, generally dealing with teen-age heartache or a campus-based mystery. In June 1969, Supergirl assumed the lead spot in *Adventure Comics,* but despite frequent costume changes (including a hot pants ensemble she donned for most of the 1970s) and two attempts at headlining her own title, it became obvious to readers that she had never really developed her own personality. Still, publisher DC Comics kept the character in print in one fashion or another, trading on her licensing potential through a variety of dolls, pencil cases, purses, and other products targeting young girls.

In the early to mid-1980s, Supergirl, having shed her hot pants for a skirt and a headband right out of singer Olivia Newton-John's "Physical" music video, was headed for the big time—and for disaster. Writer Marv Wolfman, while pitching to DC his twelve-issue comic book opus *Crisis on Infinite Earths,* suggested that Supergirl be killed to give more emotional resonance to this continuity-reshaping series. Editorial director Dick Giordano agreed, calling Supergirl "Superman with boobs." The company's other executives hesitated, as Supergirl was about to star in a summer 1984 movie from the producers of the first three Superman movies. The theatrical *Supergirl,* featuring Helen Slater in a charming title performance, with Faye Dunaway hamming it up as a campy witch antagonist, tanked at the box office, and the decree was made: Supergirl would die. And she did so, in *Crisis* #7 (October 1985), valiantly sacrificing herself to save other heroes. By the end of the *Crisis* series, the Girl of Steel had been removed from the rewritten DC mythology.

In 1986, author/artist John Byrne revamped the Superman legend in his six-issue *Man of Steel* series, and by 1988, a new Supergirl was introduced. Created from protoplasm in an alternate reality known as the "pocket universe," Supergirl, originally called "Matrix," ventured to Metropolis to recruit Superman's aid in overcoming a menace from back home. Making Earth her adopted planet, the new Supergirl's career has been fraught with change. After merging her body with that of the dying Linda Danvers, she upped the super-ante by becoming an angel with fiery wings, before morphing yet again, experiencing a makeover into a cutesy blonde with a bare midriff and lace-up boots.

However, a version of Supergirl that was closer to the original version was introduced on television in 1998, in *Superman: The Animated Series.* Since DC Comics insisted at that time that Superman must be the only survivor of Krypton, the animated version of Supergirl, named Kara In-Ze, and voiced by Nicholle Tom, was not Superman's cousin but came from the planet Argo, a colony of Krypton. This version of Supergirl also appeared on the animated *Justice League Unlimited.*

In late 2002, DC Comics came full circle when Supergirl encountered a youngster, flying, dressed in a supercostume, zipping from a crashed spaceship, just as Superman had discovered her in 1959. This was the Kryptonian Supergirl Kara, the cousin of Superman and a survivor of Argo City—but from a parallel universe, to which she soon returned. Beginning in the pages of *Superman: The 10-Cent Adventure* (2003), yet another Supergirl (a buxom babe in a black swimsuit and blue, flowing cape) entered DC continuity, claiming to be the daughter of Superman. These continual changes illustrate what's right and wrong with the twenty-first-century Superman franchise: While it's exciting to see new spins on classic themes, frequent reinventions make the continuity so confusing that it is inaccessible for the casual or new reader. That may be why, in early 2004, DC brought back a contemporary version of the "real" Kara Zor-El, best known to the general public and best loved by longtime fans, in issue #8 of the hit *Superman/Batman* series.

This storyline, by writer Jeph Loeb, reintroducing Kara into official continuity was adapted into the direct to video animated film *Superman/Batman: Apocalypse* (2010), with Summer Glau (*Firefly, Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*) as the voice of Supergirl. The beautiful Laura Vandervoort played Kara in numerous episodes of the live-action TV series *Smallville,* from 2007 to 2011.

Jeph Loeb was the initial writer on the new *Supergirl* comics series that began in 2005. In September 2011, DC Comics relaunched the *Supergirl* comics with a new series written by Michael Green and Mike Johnson, and drawn by Mahmud Asrar.

DC Comics introduced Power Girl, an alternate version of Supergirl from the parallel world Earth-2, in *All-Star Comics* #58 (January–February 1976). She was created by writer Gerry Conway and artists Ric Estrada and Wally Wood (who endowed her with her famously voluptuous figure). Her Kryptonian name is Kara Zor-L, and she uses the secret identity of Karen Starr. A member of the Justice Society of America, Power Girl later became a team member of Sovereign Seven, in writer Chris Claremont's creator-owned DC series of that name. Though a popular character, she did not receive her own ongoing comic book series until *Power Girl* debuted in 2008, initially written by the team of Jimmy Palmiotti and Justin Gray, and drawn by Amanda Conner in her characteristically witty and sexy style. *—ME & PS*

Superhero Cartoon Shows

Animation has been a staple of television almost since the medium's inception, although superheroes were not quick to catch on. Early cartoons—relegated mostly to Saturday mornings or after-school timeslots—were generally repeats of theatrical comedy shorts strung together into half-hour blocks. Early examples of superhero cartoons included all funny-animal characters such as *The Mighty Mouse Playhouse* (1955–1966), the Bob Kane–created *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse* (1960), shoe-shine boy turned superhero *Underdog* (1964–1973), and insect and rodent heroes *The Atom Ant/Secret Squirrel Show* (1965–1968).

The year 1965 saw the debut of the first two animated superheroes who were played for adventure instead of comedy. *The Eighth Man* (syndicated, 1965) was a Japanese import show about an android crime fighter, while Grantray-Lawrence's *The Marvel Super-Heroes* (syndicated, 1965) featured five days of superhero programming (*Captain America, The Incredible Hulk, Iron Man, Mighty Thor,* and *Sub-Mariner*).

New heroes were created for American television in 1966. *Frankenstein Jr. and the Impossibles* (CBS, 1966–1968) featured a trio of rock-and-rolling crime fighters known as Fluid Man, Multi-Man, and Coil Man. CBS's *Space Ghost and Dino Boy* (CBS, 1966–1968) gave top billing to a space-bound crime fighter with powerful gauntlets. *The Super Six* (NBC, 1966–1969) starred heroes defined by their names: Granite Man, Super Scuba, Elevator Man, Magnet Man, and Captain Whammy. Ralph Bakshi's *The Mighty Heroes* (CBS, 1966–1967) were an odd quintet named Diaper Man, Cuckoo Man, Rope Man, Strong Man, and Tornado Man.

A banner year for animated heroes arrived in 1967. *Batfink* (syndicated, 1967) was a parody of a certain other Bat-hero, and was accompanied by sidekick Karate. *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio* (NBC, 1967–1968) featured stories with Birdman, Birdboy, and their pet eagle, Avenger, as they fought crime, while Vapor Man, Galaxy Girl, and Meteor Man were the trio of the title. Galaxy Girl shared with Invisible Girl of Hanna-Barbera's *The Fantastic Four* (ABC, 1967–1970) and Mera of Filmation's *The Superman-Aquaman Hour of Adventure* (CBS, 1967–1968) the title of the first animated superheroines. Grantray-Lawrence again checked in with an ultra-popular *Spiderman* series (ABC, 1967–1970), while *Super President* (NBC, 1967–1968) saw the country led by a crime-fighting Commander in Chief.

The following several years debuted few new hero shows, largely because the others were popular enough to go to second or third seasons. Filmation's *The Batman/Superman Hour* (CBS, 1968–1969), *Aquaman* (CBS, 1968–1969), and *The Adventures of Batman* (CBS, 1969–1970) were extensions of previous shows. In 1973, Hanna-Barbera teamed several of DC Comics' top heroes together as *Super Friends* (ABC, 1973–1977), while police janitor turned kung fu hero *Hong Kong Phooey* (ABC, 1974–1976) rode to crime sites in his Phooeymobile. Old heroes got a new life in *The Space Ghost/Frankenstein Jr. Show* (NBC, 1976–1977), and comedy dog hero Dynomutt joined with Blue Falcon to fight crime in *The Scooby-Doo/Dynomutt Hour* (ABC, 1976–1977).

In 1977 the format of *Super Friends* was altered to *The All New Super Friends Hour* (ABC, 1977–1978), while Batman played double duty, also starring in Filmation's *The New Adventures of Batman* (CBS, 1977), and later *The Batman/Tarzan Adventure Hour* (CBS, 1977–1978). The following year, the show was changed to *Tarzan and the Super 7* (CBS, 1978–1980), and several superhero elements were added: *Freedom Force* featured Isis, Hercules, Merlin, Super Samurai, and Sinbad; *Web Woman* featured a heroine given spider powers and accompanied on her adventures by an alien pet named Spinner; *Manta and Moray* showcased the last survivor of an underwater civilization and his girlfriend; and *Super Stretch and Microwoman* featured African Americans Chris and Christy Cross, who could shrink and stretch to fight crime. Rumored legal trouble from both DC and Marvel led to few episodes (and fewer reruns) of the latter three series.

Then 1978 saw *Dynomutt, Dog Wonder* (ABC, 1978), another new title for Hanna-Barbera's *Challenge of the Super Friends* (ABC, 1978–1979), and a trio of familiar Marvel heroes—plus a clownish robot sidekick—in *The New Fantastic Four* (NBC, 1978–1979). The following year was a banner year for heroes, though several of them were comedy oriented. *The Super Globetrotters* (NBC, 1979–1980) refashioned the basketball-playing Harlem Globetrotters into the superheroes Multi-Man, Sphere Man, Gizmo Man, Spaghetti Man, and Fluid Man. *The Plastic Man Comedy-Adventure Show* (ABC, 1979–1980) featured the Quality/DC stretchable character, as well as a segment called *Might Man and Yukk,* featuring a tiny hero and the world's ugliest dog fighting crime. Hanna-Barbera debuted a new series called *Fred and Barney Meet the Thing* (NBC, 1979), teaming characters from *The Flintstones* with one member of the *Fantastic Four.* Another Marvel character made her debut in Depatie-Freleng's *Spider-Woman* (ABC, 1979–1980), and the DC superteam got another new incarnation with *The World's Greatest Super Friends* (ABC, 1979–1980).

Format changes resulted in more name changes for older series in 1980: *The Super Friends Hour* (ABC, 1980–1981), *Batman and the Super 7* (NBC, 1980–1981), and *The Plastic Man/Baby Plas Super Comedy* (ABC, 1980–1981). Hanna-Barbera mixed monsters and teens to become the superheroes Drak, Frankie, and Howler, and pitted them against Dr. Dred and O.G.R.E. in *Drak Pack* (CBS, 1980–1982). The following season saw the return of Space Ghost in *Space Stars* (NBC, 1981–1982), and another name change for *The Super Friends* (ABC, 1981–1984). Marvel's web-spinning hero appeared on the network show *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* (NBC, 1981–1982) and in a syndicated solo version called simply *Spider-Man* (1981–1982). Prescott-Scheimer's *Kid Super-Power Hour with Shazam!* (NBC, 1981–1982) featured animated adventures with the Fawcett/DC Marvel Family (Captain Marvel, Mary Marvel, Captain

Marvel Jr.), as well as adventures of the teen heroes who attended Hero High (Captain California, Gorgeous Gal, Dirty Trixie, Misty Magic, Rex Ruthless, Weatherman, and Punk Rock).

The following several years mainly featured name and format changes for a few continuing series: *The Incredible Hulk and The Amazing Spider-Man* (NBC, 1982–1983), which added a half-hour *Hulk* component; *The Amazing Spider-Man and the Incredible Hulk* (NBC, 1983–1984); and *Super Friends—The Legendary Super Powers Show* (ABC, 1984–1985). A British comic strip was brought to the United States with *Bananaman* (Nickelodeon, 1985–1987), in which a banana-eating wimp becomes a superhero. That year also saw the final name change (and final incarnation) for Hanna-Barbera's venerable Super Friends with *The Super Powers Team: Galactic Guardians* (ABC, 1985–1986).

Defenders of the Earth (syndicated, 1986–1987) featured King Features' comic strip heroes the Phantom, Flash Gordon, Mandrake the Magician, and Lothar, as they protected Earth's future from Ming the Merciless. A family of bionic-powered heroes fought Dr. Scarab in *Bionic Six* (syndicated, 1987). An old heroic mouse reappeared for funny—and sometimes controversial—new stories with *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures* (CBS, 1987–1989), while comicdom's hero supreme reappeared in a new Ruby-Spears series with *Superman* (CBS, 1988–1989). The universe's cuddliest hero arrived in the form of a superpowered teddy bear, set to battle Skeleton, Bulk, and Texas Pete in *The Further Adventures of Super-Ted* (syndicated, 1988–1989).

As the 1990s began, superheroes had all but disappeared from the airwaves, though that would soon change. Environmental heroes faced villainous polluters and strip miners in *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* (syndicated, 1990–1995), while Disney produced its first hero cartoon with the adventurer known as *Darkwing Duck* (Disney Channel and ABC, 1991–1995), who protected the city of St. Canard from evildoers. Musician M. C. Hammer donned magic shoes to become a superhero in *Hammerman* (ABC, 1991–1992), but by the following year, weird heroes were in vogue. DIC produced a short-lived *Swamp Thing* cartoon (Fox, 1991), while bizarre and deformed Troma movie creations Toxic Crusader (toned down from Toxic Avenger), double-craniumed Headbasher, Junkyard, and No Zone fought against evil polluters and mutants, such as Zarzoza from the planet Smogula, Bonehead, Psycho, and Dr. Killemoff in *Toxic Crusaders* (syndicated, 1991–1992). The following year, two excellent comic book adaptations began their runs on Fox: *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992–1994) and *X-Men* (1992–1997).

The biggest year for superheroes in history was 1994, with eight new series debuting, and one going through a name change: *The Adventures of Batman & Robin* (Fox, 1994–1997). Marvel's web-spinner debuted with a brand new show in *Spider-Man* (Fox, 1994–1998), while New England Comics' big blue hero arrived in *The Tick* (Fox, 1994–1997), and Image saw representation with both *Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.S* (CBS, 1994–1995) and *The Maxx* on *MTV Oddities* (MTV, 1994–1995). Two Marvel series were combined for *The Marvel Action Hour* (syndicated, 1994–1996), with *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man* sharing the screen. Animation met live-action in the wacky talk show *Space Ghost Coast-to-Coast* (Cartoon Network, 1994–2003), and a purple-clad King Features hero saw more futuristic adventuring against environmental villains in *Phantom 2040* (syndicated, 1994–1996).

Several more comic book properties reached TV screens in 1995, with DIC's production of Malibu's *UltraForce* (syndicated, 1995–1996), Image's *Savage Dragon* (USA Network, 1995–1997), and Dark Horse's movie spin-off, *The Mask* (CBS and syndicated, 1995–1997). Also on tap were the zany antics of a computer geek turned rubber-boned superhero in *Steven Spielberg Presents Freakazoid!* (WB, 1995–1996). Superhero action figures came to life in the *Kablam!* segment *Action League Now!!!* (Nickelodeon, 1996–1999), with short segments featuring the Flesh, Stinky Diver, Thundergirl, the Chief, and Melt Man. The following year DC produced the critically acclaimed *Superman* (WB, 1996–1997) and Marvel's green-skinned Goliath returned in *The Incredible Hulk* (UPN, 1996–1997). Both series changed titles and gained fellow heroes the next season, with *The New Batman/Superman Adventures* (WB, 1997–1998) and *The Incredible Hulk and She-Hulk* (UPN, 1997–1998). Aimed squarely at mature audiences, *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* also debuted in late night timeslots (HBO, 1997–1999).

In 1998, Marvel's angst-ridden space hero debuted with *The Silver Surfer* (Fox, 1998–1999), and a trio of cute girl heroines debuted with their own series (though two earlier cartoons had aired in 1995 and 1996). Bubbles, Buttercup, and Blossom are the *Powerpuff Girls* (Cartoon Network, 1998–2009) and they fight such enemies as evil monkey Mojo Jojo, Fuzzy Lumpkins, Princess Morebucks, and others. The following year, a futuristic relaunch of Marvel's top hero tanked in the ratings with *Spider-Man Unlimited* (Fox, 1999), while a futuristic version of DC's dark hero soared with *Batman Beyond* (WB, 1999–2002). Even cute and addictive kids series *SpongeBob SquarePants* (Nickelodeon, 1999–present) got into the hero business, with undersea crime fighters Barnacle Boy and Mermaid Man appearing as Spongebob's favorite TV heroes.

An old Hanna-Barbera hero was revived for the bizarrely funny *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law* (Cartoon Network, 2000–2007), in which the ex-hero took on legal cases from other cartoon characters. Milestone's African American teen hero Static debuted in his own series called *Static Shock* (WB, 2000–2004), while Marvel's popular mutants were revived in *X-Men: Evolution* (WB, 2000–2003). *Batman Beyond* spun off a fugitive hero character into its own series with *The Zeta Project* (WB, 2001–2002), while DC's top heroes reunited for a well-received *Justice League* (Cartoon Network, 2001–2004) and *Justice League Unlimited* (Cartoon Network, 2004–2006). *Ren & Stimpy* creator John Kricfalusi created *The Ripping Friends* (Fox and Cartoon Network, 2001–2002), a quartet of strange muscle bound heroes—Rip, Slag, Crag, and Chunk—who "ripped" criminals ranging from wormy Flathead and egg-stealing Ovulator, to sentient wads of chewing gum. The series proved too odd for Saturday mornings. And speaking of odd, *The Fairly Oddparents* (Nickelodeon, 2001–present) features Timmy, a boy whose wishes can bring his favorite comic book heroes to life, including Crimson Chin (voiced by Jay Leno), and Cleft the Boy Chin Wonder, as well as Crash Nebula. Timmy also becomes Turbo Timmy in one episode.

In 2002, Disney produced a show in which young kids become the superheroes Captain Crandall, Skate Lad, and Rope Girl in *Teamo Supremo* (ABC and Toon Disney, 2002–2011), fighting villains such as Baron Blitz, Mr. Inflato, the Sinister Stylist, and the Birthday Bandit. An anime-inspired version of *Teen Titans* (Cartoon Network, 2003–2006) debuted, with the teen heroes opposing the Fearsome Five, Terminator, Trident, and others. On the adult front, Stan Lee's *Stripperella,* (TNT and Spike, 2003–2004), based on and voiced by Pamela Anderson, doffed clothes and battled villains, and *Spider-Man* returned (MTV, 2003) for a set of computer-animated adventures based on the feature film.

Other recent animated series include Canada's *Atomic Betty* (2004–present), the anime-influenced *The Batman* (The WB, 2004–2008), *Legion of Super Heroes* (Cartoon Network, 2006–2008), *WordGirl* (PBS Kids, 2007–present), *The Spectacular Spider-Man* (The CW, 2008–2009), *Wolverine and the X-Men* (Nicktoons, 2008–2009), the generally light-hearted *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* (Cartoon Network, 2008–2011), the CGI series *Iron Man: Armored Adventures* (Nicktoons, 2008–present), Marvel's child-oriented *The Super Hero Squad Show* (Cartoon Network, 2009–present), *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes* (Disney XD, 2010–present), *Young Justice* (Cartoon Network, 2011–present), and the CGI series *Green Lantern: The Animated Series* (Cartoon Network, 2011–present). The lead characters in *The Venture Bros.* (2003–present), part of Cartoon Network's Adult Swim programming, are not superheroes, but its supporting cast is full of parodied superheroes and supervillains.

One of the biggest successes among current animated series stars a superhero who was created for television, not for the comics. The Cartoon Network series *Ben 10* was created by the "Man of Action" team, consisting of veteran superhero comics writers Joe Casey, Joe Kelly, Duncan Rouleau, and Steven T. Seagle. Its hero, Ben Tennyson, was ten years old when he found and first put on the Omnitrix, an extraterrestrial device that resembles a watch and that enables Ben to transform himself into any of ten different alien life forms. The first episode of the original *Ben 10* series premiered on Cartoon Network in December 2005 and continued into 2008. It was followed by a second series, *Ben 10: Alien Force* (2008–2010), set five years later, when Ben is 15. The third series, *Ben 10: Ultimate Alien,* began in 2010. As of 2011, Cartoon Network Studios is working on a fourth *Ben 10* animated series and Warner Bros. Pictures is preparing to shoot a live action *Ben 10* motion picture. —*AM & PS*

Superhero Role-Playing and Video Games

Fantasy role-playing games—mostly tabletop wargame-variants in which three or more players take on the personalities of characters they have developed for use in fantasy combat or treasure-hunting situations—can trace their origins to the advent of *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974, TSR Games). An individual *Dungeons and Dragons* (*D&D*) game session, generally a part of a larger game cycle known as a *campaign,* is moderated by a *dungeonmaster* (or gamemaster), who designs the game milieu—the castle to be stormed, the dragon's hoard to be raided, and the monsters to be fought. The players bring into the game characters whose basic abilities (numerically quantifiable traits such as strength, intelligence, wisdom, dexterity, constitution, and charisma) are determined by means of random die throws. Polyhedral dice, whose sides can number anywhere from 4 to 20, generate the random numbers that govern the outcome of the game's many variables, including the number of points of damage sustained or inflicted during combat, the efficacy of magic spell-casting or weaponry, the chance that a character's actions will attract an enemy or activate a booby trap, and even character mortality.

Building on the fantasy worlds of J. R. R. Tolkien and others, *D&D* spawned a vast role-playing game (RPG) industry, which supports many competing gaming systems. Some RPGs have complex rule systems that emphasize realism and control nearly every conceivable game variable, while others place a higher premium on ease of play, storytelling values, and character evolution. During the 1970s and 1980s, RPGs were devised for a wide variety of story backdrops and storytelling genres, including space opera science fiction, postapocalyptic science fiction, international espionage, Lovecraftian horror, the Western—and comic book superheroes.

During the early 1980s, three RPGs came to dominate the superhero gaming audience: *Champions* (Hero Games; Gold Rush Games), *Superworld* (Chaosium), and *Villains and Vigilantes* (Fantasy Games Unlimited). Not surprisingly, each game system had its own distinctive approach to superhero gaming, with unique strengths and weaknesses.

Designed to closely simulate the world of a mainstream, four-color superhero universe, *Champions* boasted a flexible character-generation system that allowed players to build their superheroes' abilities around a theme (say, "insect powers"), rather than forcing them to rely too heavily on the random results of die-rolls. Combat was typically "kinder and gentler" than in *D&D;* though characters were often knocked unconscious during the game's combat simulations, death was an uncommon occurrence, reflecting the superhero comics of the time. The *Superworld* RPG was written as part of a short-lived multigenre gaming system called *Worlds of Wonder,* whose rules encompassed not only superheroes but also Tolkienesque fantasy and space-borne science fiction; *Superworld*'s game mechanics worked particularly well for simulating the established heroes of the Marvel and DC universes. Another popular early 1980s game, *Villains and Vigilantes,* also had an authentically "comic-booky" feel, thanks in large part to the interior artwork of Jeff Dee; some players have observed, however, that *V&V*'s character-generation rules were more dice-based—and therefore less flexible—than the other systems. Because of the game's reliance on die-generated character traits, it was far too easy to create groups of characters whose power levels weren't a good fit (imagine the difficulties inherent in forcing DC's Batgirl and Marvel's world-devouring Galactus to share an adventure). The game was also plagued by large numbers of rules errata, which the publisher corrected by inserting update sheets into the rulebooks. Bits and pieces of the worlds and rules of *Superworld, Champions,* and *Villains and Vigilantes* made their way into a successor game titled *Havoc* (1984, Reality Storm: When Worlds Collide), a superhero RPG that remains in print today.

It was only a matter of time before superhero RPGs, which owed their existence to superhero comics, begat some comics of their own. *Champions*' signature superteam (the Guardians) became the basis for two *Champions* comics series (1986–1987, Eclipse; 1987–1989, Hero). Two *Villains and Vigilantes* "game modules" (game scenarios published for use by gamemasters in RPG play) by Bill Willingham inspired the artist's compelling superhero team comics series, *The Elementals* (1984–1989; 1989–1994; 1995, Comico), which borrowed the villainous Destroyers directly from the game. Eclipse Comics also produced a four-issue miniseries (1986–1987) based upon a *V&V* game module titled *Crisis at Crusaders Citadel,* created by the game's originators, writer Jack Herman and illustrator Jeff Dee. Several of the superheroes developed by award-winning science fiction writer George R. R. Martin, and others, for the *Wild Cards* paperback fiction anthologies (some of which Marvel began adapting into comics in 1990), grew out of campaigns played within these three game systems. Clearly, the superheroes of the games and those of comics and prose literature have had powerful mutual influences.

As the networks of comics-oriented and gaming-oriented specialty shops expanded throughout the 1980s, several more superhero-oriented RPGs followed the original three, including Palladium Games' *Heroes Unlimited,* which debuted in 1984 for use with the generic (and still extant) RIFTS fantasy gaming system; a version of *Heroes Unlimited* remains in print today. Palladium followed this with an RPG based upon Kevin Eastman's and Peter Laird's popular and durable superhero/martial arts parody comic book, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.* Following on the heels of these successful games were several also-rans, such as *Justifiers* and *Guardians* (StarChilde Publications), both of which were plagued by confusing rules, a flaw mitigated somewhat by the games' cheap purchase prices and their "comic-book format" presentation.

By the late 1980s, the major comics publishers had taken note of the burgeoning superhero RPG market; to satisfy the rising demand for game systems based upon their characters, Marvel Comics and DC Comics sold RPG licenses, each of which resulted in well-crafted, slickly-produced, and generally well-received game rulebooks and modules. By the end of the decade, Mayfair Games was publishing the *DC Heroes Role-Playing Game* and the *Batman Role-Playing Game,* while TSR (of *D&D* fame) was producing *Marvel Super Heroes,* as well as a line of small lead figures intended for use as game tokens (à la the war games that preceded the emergence of the first true RPG). Both of these gaming systems were widely praised for their well-described, carefully quantified characters, their ease of play, and their usefulness as reference tools for the comic books themselves.

As is true in the comics industry, the RPG market is a volatile one; publishers come and go, or end up mergered out of existence. Specific RPG properties either vanish forever, or evolve into something new. Despite a surfeit of competing modern pastimes—i.e., electronic media such as the Gameboy, the X-Box, or MMORPGs (Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, campaigns conducted over the Internet by dozens or hundreds of players)—a small but enthusiastic audience for traditional tabletop pencil-and-paper superhero RPGs still existed in the late 1990s and persists today. Steve Jackson Games' GURPS (General Universal Role-Playing System) *Supers* appeared in the early 1990s and remains in print. This game system's emphasis on combat realism—inasmuch as the concept makes sense in a superhero milieu—places players' characters at considerable risk of injury or death. Nineteen ninety-five saw the release of *Cosmic Enforcers* (Myrmidon Press), an RPG in which superhumans protect the Earth from invading arachnoid aliens. A revised, simplified version of *Champions* (including much improved interior artwork) appeared in 1998, and remains in print today; some of the changes made to the game proved unpopular, thus prompting a re-release of the original rulebook. Also in 1998, Mayfair lost the license to produce *DC Heroes,* which moved to Task Force Games. At roughly the same time, UNI Games issued *Living Legends,* a superhero RPG based upon the venerable *Villains and Vigilantes* game.

While few of the many superhero RPGs introduced over the past three decades have proved as durable as the mass-marketed *Dungeons and Dragons*—which is still going strong today as both *Dungeons and Dragons* and *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons,* both under the aegis of Wizards of the Coast—several still have substantial followings today. The recent profusion of superhero RPGs, most of which are available only through specialty vendors, includes such attractively packaged entries as: the light-hearted *Superbabes* (1997, TriCity Games), which emphasizes the powerhouses of Bill Black's AC Comics line; *Nemesis: A Perfect World* (2001, Maximum CNG), which blends superheroics with postapocalyptic science fiction; *Mutants and Masterminds* (2002, Green Ronin Publishing), a game system set in the appropriately heroic-sounding "Freedom City"; *Silver Age Sentinels: The Ultimate Superhero RPG* (2002, Guardians of Order, Inc.), a game supported by a line of miniature tabletop figurines and whose slick, detailed rulebook is reminiscent of that of *Advanced D&D; Godlike* (2002, Hobgoblynn Press), which chronicles the clash between the superheroes of the Allies and the Axis in an alternate World War II; *Heroes by Gaslight* (2002, Web of Horrors/Web of Heroes), which places superheroes in the Victorian Age; *Judge Dredd* (2002, Mongoose Publishing), a game centered on Britain's over-the-top protector of Mega-City One; *Cartoon Action Hour* (2003, Z-Man Games, Inc.), which delivers superheroic action in the mold of such 1980s animated kid-vid as *G.I. Joe, Thundercats, Transformers,* and *Masters of the Universe;* the *DC Universe Roleplaying Game* (1999, 2002, West End Games); the *Marvel Universe* RPG (2003, Marvel Comics); and Cryptic Studios' multiplayer RPG *City of Heroes* (2004, NCsoft) and *City of Villains* (2005, NCsoft).

In 2011, Sony Online Entertainment released the enormous DC Universe Online role-playing game (MMORPG), featuring numerous DC Comics superheroes like Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and many more, as well as villains such as Lex Luthor and the Joker. Players create their own characters, who are mentored by the established DC stars. DC's Chief Creative Officer Geoff Johns is the game's main writer, and DC co-publisher Jim Lee is the game's Executive Creative Director.

Another way to feel some of the excitement of playing a superhero is through video games. For over two decades there have been numerous video games based on familiar superheroes and their movies. Among noted examples are *Batman: The Video Game* (1990, Sunsoft), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Arcade Game* (1990, Ultra Games), *Captain America and the Avengers* (1991, Data East), *X-Men: Arcade Game* (1992, Konami), *The Punisher* (1993, Capcom), *Spider-Man and Venom: Maximum Carnage* (1994, Acclaim), *Marvel vs. Capcom 2: A New Age of Heroes* (2000, Capcom), *Spider-Man 2* (2004, Activision), *X Men Legends: Rise of Apocalypse* (2005, Activision), *The Punisher* (2005, THQ), *The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* (2005, Vivendi Games), *Spider-Man: Web of Shadows* (2008, Activision), and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009, Activision).

Video games have been attracting celebrated talent from superhero works in other media. For example, in *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions* (2010, Activision), Neil Patrick Harris provides the voice of Spider-Man, as he did on television in *Spider-Man: The New Animated Series* (2003). The award-winning *Batman: Arkham Asylum* (2009, Warner Bros. Interactive/DC) is written by Paul Dini, one of the main writers on the classic *Batman: The Animated Series,* and features three leading voice actors recreating their roles from the series: Kevin Conroy as Batman, Mark Hamill as the Joker, and Arleen Sorkin as Harley Quinn. Dini also wrote the sequel, *Batman:*

Arkham City (2011, Warner Bros. Interactive/DC), in which Conroy and Hamill return to their roles. —*MAM & PS*

Superheroines

Superheroes, no matter their media of presentation, have always held a mirror to society and offered a reflection of cultural attitudes. No better example of this can be found than with super*heroines*.

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were teen nebbishes when they created Superman, and their brazen Man of Steel clearly embodied the male adolescent power fantasy: He was handsome, self-assured, in control, and robust, attributes most insecure teenage boys can only covet. Little did Siegel and Shuster realize that they were paving a societal super-highway with their character. Following Superman's phenomenally lucrative 1938 debut, a heroic brotherhood quickly appeared: Batman, Captain Marvel, Sub-Mariner, the Human Torch, Captain America. Even the teenage sidekicks, like Robin the Boy Wonder and Bucky, were high-spirited males. The burgeoning business of superhero comics was the publishing equivalent of the "He-Man Woman Hater's Club" from the *Little Rascals* film shorts. When women did appear in comics, they were damsels in distress. It's no wonder that girls found this new genre of comic books unattractive.

THE FIRST FEMALE SUPERHEROES

Comics publishers of this era tried to attract a female audience—they just didn't try very hard. Four significant female heroines, although not *superheroines* in the strictest sense, all showed up in 1940. First came Fantomah, Mystery Woman of the Jungle, an unabashed attempt to milk the success of *The Phantom* and *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*. Debuting in Fiction House's *Jungle Comics* #2 (February 1940), Fantomah wore no mask, but instead transformed her appearance from a beautiful blonde to a skull-faced monstress (keeping her flowing golden locks in the process), and used her supernatural powers to combat evil. During her four-year career, she was confined to *Jungle Comics*' backup strips, almost as if Fiction House was ashamed of her. On his Toonopedia website, Don Markstein observed, "From beginning to end, Fantomah was obscure almost to the point of vanishing."

The Woman in Red, the first cos*tumed* heroine, originally donned her disguise in Standard Comics' *Thrilling Comics* #2 (March 1940). She was actually police officer Peggy Allen, but by night she sported a crimson hood, mask, and cloak—as well as a revolver—to mop up crime without the judicial restraints that tied her hands in her day job. Fighting gangsters and thugs until 1945, the Woman in Red fared slightly better than Fantomah: While she was never cover-featured on *Thrilling*, her headshot was squeezed onto the covers of *America's Best Comics* #1 and #2 (1942). Largely unknown other than for her historical significance, the Woman in Red managed to resurface in 2001, in an homage by Alan Moore in the pages of ABC's *Tom Strong* (and in a related 2003 miniseries, *Terra Obscura*), and appears among AC Comics' vast stable of reclaimed characters from comics history.

On the heels of the Woman in Red came Lady Luck, first seen in the June 2, 1940, newspaper comic book supplement, *The Spirit*. Lady Luck was the feminine answer to the Green Hornet she even had her own "Kato," a chauffeur named Peecolo. She was actually a bored socialite, Brenda Banks, who at night concealed her identity with a green veil and caught criminals for kicks. Like the Hornet, Lady Luck was wanted by the law, complicating Banks' relationship with the police chief.

In November 1940 readers were introduced to the first cross-dressing superhero: Red Tornado. Strictly played for laughs, Red Tornado was actually Ma Hunkel, a stout matron who dressed up in red long johns, with a cooking pot for a helmet, in the *Scribbly* series appearing in DC Comics' *All American Comics*, starting with issue #20.

The first supervillainess also premiered in 1940. In the pages of *Batman* #1, Batman and Robin encountered a natty cat burglar slinking about in a form-fitting green dress. Batman was smitten by this kitten calling herself "The Cat," but before long she would be renamed Catwoman, and would begin a lengthy career as a sometime-thief, sometime-heroine.

As evidenced by the low profile afforded Fantomah and the Woman in Red, comic book publishers weren't convinced that a superheroine could sell a comic. Newspaper syndicates were more courageous, and in April 1941, a vivacious, costumed heroine dressed in a skintight leopard suit began fighting crime in a Sunday newspaper comic strip. This was Miss Fury, a character whose series "combined intelligently written mys teries with cinematic action sequences shown from multiple viewpoints," according to superheroine historian Trina Robbins in her book *The Great Women Superheroes* (1996). Miss Fury feared no man, slapping and scolding bad guys, even whipping them with her tail. Her adventures were written and drawn by a real-life woman of wonder: Tarpe Mills, one of the first successful female creators to render superheroines for the printed page. Mills was, like her character, glamorous. *Miss Fury* was a popular strip, enjoyed by both sexes, and Mills basked in the glow of celebrity its acclaim brought her.

Comic *book* publishers impressed with *Miss Fury*'s success tested the waters with more superheroines, but cautiously stuck only one toe in. The Black Cat, dressed in a black swimsuit and a pointy-topped eye mask, started her career in Harvey Comics' *Pocket Comics* #1. She was secretly movie star/stuntwoman Linda Turner, who used the tricks of her trade and gimmicks from movie sets as "Hollywood's Glamorous Crime Fighter," solving mysteries in Tinseltown. The Phantom Lady's adventures transpired on the opposite coast, in Washington, D.C. Premiering in Quality Comics' *Police Comics* #1 (1941), Phantom Lady, decked out in a bathing suit and cape, thwarted political assassinations and other crimes with her blackout ray projector, which she wore as a bracelet. Probably the first superheroine to bring together the holy trinity of costume, secret identity, and superpowers to the comic book page was Bulletgirl, the elixir-powered, airborne companion of Fawcett Comic's Bulletman. Bulletgirl's first appearance (in early 1941) predates those of Wonder Woman, Mary Marvel, and even the Black Cat, though her sidekick status seems to prevent this from being often recognized.

SUPREMA STARTS A TREND

Dr. William Moulton Marston, eminent psychologist and inventor of the lie detector, created for DC Comics the most famous of all superheroines: "Suprema, the Wonder Woman." Marston's concept underwent obvious name-doctoring, and Wonder Woman, the beautiful red-white-and-blue-clad Amazon, who fearlessly deflected bullets with her bracelets, first saw print in *All Star Comics* #8 (December 1941–January 1942)—just as the bombing of Pearl Harbor dragged the United States into World War II. DC had more faith in this superheroine than its competitors did in theirs. Wonder Woman busted onto the cover of *Sensation Comics* #1 (January 1942), and by that summer she was also awarded her own title. Wonder Woman embodied feminine and masculine traits: She was a compassionate feminist who would fight when necessary. A favorite of girls, *Wonder Woman* also sold to boys during the war, as the heroine epitomized patriotism –*and* had a great pair of legs (comics have never been shy about the sexual exploitation of the feminine form).

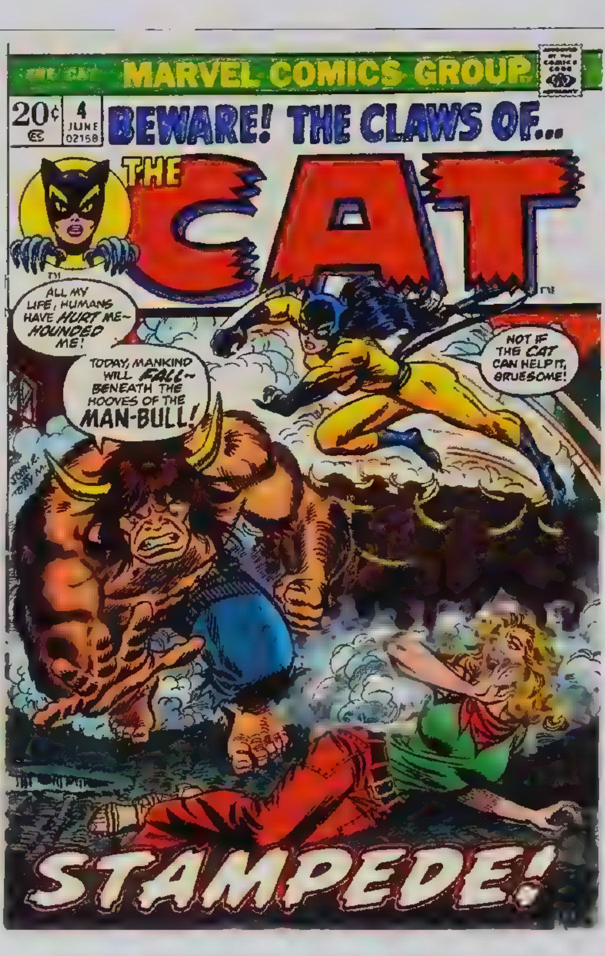
World War II empowered American women. While men were overseas, their wives, sisters, and mothers took over back home. They worked in the factories and played professional baseball, all while raising the children. A nation of wonder women.

This gender strengthening augmented the status of comics superheroines, and the stands were soon filled with them. In addition to Bulletgirl, Fawcett Comics had Mary Marvel, the supergirl sibling of Captain Marvel, who, like her brother, said "Shazam!" to gain her mighty powers. DC Comics introduced the streetwise Black Canary, the battling blonde in fishnets, who became a valuable member of the Justice Society of America; Hawkgirl, the feathered fury who flew into action with her companion, Hawkman; the adventurous freedom fighter named Liberty Belle; and the assiduous Merry, Girl of a Thousand Gimmicks. Even Superman's girlfriend, the intrepid reporter Lois Lane, was a heroine in her own right: She fearlessly scaled skyscraper ledges and infiltrated mobs, all for a newspaper story.

Marvel (then Timely) Comics published Miss America, a character historian Mike Benton called "a fair sex Captain America," who punched bad guys and bad girls alike ("Sorry, sister! Hate to do this, but you invited it!" she once said while kayoing a woman) and eventually made her way into the All Winners Squad with Captain America, Sub-Mariner, and the Human Torch. Another Marvel superheroine who turned heads was the Blonde Phantom, a yellow-haired detective in a shimmering crimson gown and black mask.

Superheroines appeared from other publishers as well. Kitten was the flirtatious sidekick to Cat-Man, Quality's diminutive Doll Girl fought crime with Doll Man, and Fox's web-swinging Spider Queen employed a "spider-web fluid" two decades before Spider-Man. Commandette was an actress/stuntwoman heroine (and a rip-off of the Black Cat), making only one appearance in 1945, while Pat Parker, War Nurse, teamed with the Girl Commandos. Some superheroines were ace pilots, cut from the same cloth as real-life aviatrix Amelia Earhart: The Black Angel feigned weakness in her real identity of Sylvia Lawton but protected her native England from the "Nazi cobra of the skies, Baroness Blood," and Black Venus was a physical therapist by day, costumed air fighter by night.

Some ladies skirted the supernatural realm, like the original Black Widow (whose real name was Claire Voyant), Lady Satan, and Ghost Woman. There were masked mysterywomen and flag-waving Nazi-busters galore, too many to chronicle in full detail, but Pat Patriot, Yankee Girl, the Silver Scorpion, USA ("The Spirit of Old Glory"), Flame Girl, Miss Masque, Golden Girl, Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, Rocketgirl, Owl Girl, Atoma, Moon Girl, Lady Fairplay, and Miss Victory were among their number. Wonder Woman, Mary Marvel, and a few others aside, these superheroines were featured in anthology titles, were partners to a male superhero, or were tucked away in backup series. Publishers still lacked faith in superheroines as cover-featured stars.


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
20¢
4 JUNE 02158
BEWARE! THE CLAWS OF...
THE CAT
ALL MY LIFE, HUMANS HAVE HURT ME—HOUNDED ME!
TODAY, MANKIND WILL FALL—BENEATH THE HOOVES OF THE MAN-BULL!
NOT IF THE CAT CAN HELP IT, GRUESOME!
STAMPEDE!

The Cat #4 © 1973 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by John Romita and Tony Mortellaro.)

HEADLIGHTS AND HEARTTHROBS

Superheroines, like their male counterparts, fell out of fashion after World War II. Comic book sales dropped, publishers folded, and genres like crime, funny animals, and Westerns supplanted superhero material. In the real world, men returned home from the war and resumed their jobs, displacing the women who had so ably filled their shoes. Some women willingly reverted to domestic roles, some did so unwillingly.

As circulations spiraled downward in the mid- to late 1940s, the comic book industry adopted extreme measures to make superheroines appealing to its male readership. Superheroines were often depicted in titillating pin-up poses, sometimes in bondage, with an abundance of cleavage exposed, in an exploitive trend called "headlights." (Matt Baker's "Good Girl art" *Phantom Lady* covers of the 1940s are highly prized collectors' items in the 2000s.) In 1948 Marvel ambitiously tried a line of superheroine comics targeted specifically at young girls—*The Blonde Phantom* being joined by *Venus, Namora,* and *Sun Girl*—but these books were canceled after short runs. By the mid-1950s only *Wonder Woman* survived, and only barely at that. Girls were now reading romance comics, a genre started in 1947 by legendary creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby with *Young Romance* #1, featuring tales (written and drawn by males) centered on immature, sighing women fawning over Mr. Right (and sometimes Mr. Wrong). Superheroines had hung up their capes and donned aprons.

THE NEW SUPERHEROINES OF THE 1960S

DC Comics introduced Batwoman in *Detective Comics* #233 (1956). She appeared not as an attempt to attract a female readership, but to counter allegations by psychiatrist Dr. Frederic Wertham that Batman and Robin were homosexuals. Batwoman was actually Kathy Kane, an heiress who dated millionaire Bruce Wayne (Batman's alter ego). Garbed in a garish red-and-yellow batsuit, Batwoman fought boredom by fighting crime, but never developed a personality beyond giddiness. By 1964, she and her sidekick Bat-Girl (a love interest for Robin) were retired.

In *Action Comics* #252 (1959) DC introduced Supergirl, the teenage cousin to Superman. Supergirl, who also survived the destruction of the Man of Steel's homeworld Krypton, packed power like her relative, but was innocent and genial. When Superman introduced her to the world in 1962, he commented, "Physically, she's the mightiest female of all time! But at heart, she's as gentle and sweet and as quick to tears—as any ordinary girl!" Supergirl's adventures accompanied Superman's in *Action* throughout the 1960s. Readers both female and male watched her mature as a heroine and a woman. For the first time in a generation, young girls had a new superheroine to emulate. Yet Supergirl's appeal wore thin over time. Attempts to expand her personality beyond her original naiveté failed, and she died—valiantly, at least, while saving the world—in *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #7 (1985).

History repeated itself in the 1960s. Superheroes were hot properties, and by mid-decade, commandeered popular culture. Marvel Comics was fundamental in reinventing the concept of superheroes —"heroes with problems"—but its initial wave of superheroines still preserved the concept of women in roles shaped by patriarchal standards. The Invisible Girl premiered in *Fantastic Four* #1 (1961), and was shy and often endangered. The telekinetic Marvel Girl (a.k.a. Jean Grey), first seen in *X-Men* #1 (1963), was mostly a love interest for X-Man Cyclops, and the self-absorbed Wasp, the only woman in Marvel's Avengers, was an affluent fashion plate who loved to shop.

Other superheroines emerged during the 1960s: A sampling includes Wonder Woman's apprentice Wonder Girl, who go-go danced with her fellow Teen Titans; Fly Girl, the clinging partner of Archie Comics' Fly Man; Elasti-Girl of the Doom Patrol, who could expand her body to humongous proportions but could not grow beyond her restrictive domestic role; Mera, the wife of Aquaman and mother of Aquababy; Marvel's magical Scarlet Witch, who was persuaded to join the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants before exerting her own free will to become a heroine; Platinum (a.k.a. Tina) of the Metal Men, a lady robot whose faulty "responsometer" caused her to go ga-ga over the human scientist who created her; and the all-new Batgirl, a high-kicking 1967 addition to both the *Batman* comics and TV show, who allowed a run in her tights to distract her from helping Batman and Robin. These characters may have put females back in action roles, but their dependent and/or indecisive personalities rooted them in stereotypical behavior.

SUPERHEROINES GET SAUCY

It took a Brit to help wedge American superheroines from this trap of tradition. In the early 1960s, actress Diana Rigg played Mrs. Emma Peel on the popular English television series *The Avengers* (not to be confused with the Marvel superteam title). Mrs. Peel was an intellectual, who was also well-trained in physical combat. Leggy

Rigg often wore skin-tight catsuits in the role, and her balance of beauty and brawn made Peel a bold new type of action heroine. Peel caught the American eye in 1966, when *The Avengers* was imported to the United States, where the character made her imprint upon superhero creators. DC's Catwoman, although a villain, went the Peel catsuit route, especially through fetching Julie Newmar's coquettish portrayal of the character on TV's live-action *Batman* series (1966–1968). The sultry Russian spy Natasha Romanoff, premiering in the *Iron Man* feature in *Tales of Suspense* #52 (1964), was one of Marvel's first female characters to exhibit a forceful personality—but she was playing on the wrong team! Soon, however, she defected to the United States, donned a form-fitting costume, and disabled villains with her "Widow's Bite" blasts, as the superheroine Black Widow.

In 1968, DC Comics borrowed heavily from TV's Emma Peel and reinvented its Amazon Princess. Wonder Woman was stripped of her superpowers and had to rely upon her newly acquired martial-arts training to survive. Wearing white jumpsuits, Diana Prince (alter ego of Wonder Woman) embarked upon globe-spanning exploits involving international thieves and assassins. This transformation was criticized by women's rights activist Gloria Steinem, who complained that DC had de-powered its principal superwoman. Other feminists joined Steinem's chorus. Dennis O'Neil, writer of *Wonder Woman* during this period, confessed in 2003, "Years later, I absolutely see what they were talking about."

In the real world, the sexual revolution of the 1960s enabled women to exert themselves physically, and the burgeoning women's rights movement afforded them political and cultural might. Women's liberation swept America: Bra burnings, sit-ins, walk outs, and demonstrations transpired to free females from societal shackles.

THE SWINGING SEVENTIES

In the 1970s women became bolder, reflected on TV with female-centric sitcoms like the workplace heroine Mary Richards on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and the boisterous, opinionated title character in the *All in the Family* spinoff *Maude*. Comics followed suit: Marvel gave the Invisible Girl more confidence and introduced a sisterhood of new superheroines. The iron maiden, Valkyrie, debuted as a sword-wielding feminist who became a member of the Defenders; two women creators—writer Linda Fite and artist Marie Severin—produced a short-lived series called *The Cat*, a crime-fighting alternative to DC's villainous Catwoman; and Black Widow took over half of *Amazing Adventures* (an anthology title shared with stories about the sexually egalitarian Inhumans), then co-starred in the pages of *Daredevil*.

When Marvel launched the all-new X-Men in 1975, among its cast of mutants was Storm, an ethereally beautiful African woman with long white hair. Storm was a survivor, an orphan who once supported herself with thievery. This weather manipulator became one of the X-Men's most popular members, and remains a favorite in the 2000s, particularly through actress Halle Berry's portrayal of the character in the live-action films *X-Men* (2000) and *X2: X-Men United* (2003).

Also in the 1970s, Marvel cranked out female clones of its best-selling characters—Spider-Woman and She-Hulk, as well as Red Sonja, the female counterpart to Conan the Barbarian—and fashioned new superheroines like the disco-spawned Dazzler. DC gave Supergirl her own series, published *Rima the Jungle Girl*, unveiled the mysterious Black Orchid in *Adventure Comics*, introduced "Earth-Two" (alternate reality) versions of Supergirl and Batgirl, with the busty Power Girl and the brooding Huntress, respectively, and produced a comic book based on the popular Saturday-morning show *Isis* (1975–1977). ElectraWoman and DynaGirl were TV superheroines during the 1976 season of *The Kroft Supershow*, and *Charlie's Angels* (1976–1981), *The Bionic Woman* (1976–1978), and *Police Woman* (1974–1978) were successful primetime TV series starring female heroes. And then there was *Wonder Woman*.

Lynda Carter, a gorgeous, five-feet-ten-inch tall former Miss World USA, rocketed to instant stardom on TV's live-action series *Wonder Woman* (1976–1979). This hour-long action-drama was originally set in the 1940s, with Wonder Woman battling Nazis and extraterrestrials, then shifted to the present day with the 1977 season, at which point Wonder Woman's alter ego, Diana Prince, sported the grooviest pantsuits and fashions of the era. For the second half of the 1970s, Wonder Woman was TV's number-one superhero, and a spate of Wonder Woman merchandising flooded the marketplace. Girls adored the Amazon Princess, and college boys and men tuned in to admire Carter's impressive attributes.

The 1970s was the decade of the liberated superheroine. Despite this cultural step forward, these superheroines were characterized with frailties, be they emotional attachment to boyfriends, husbands, children, jobs, or even their hair. That would soon change.

SUPERHEROINES GET TOUGH

The first new superheroine of the 1980s had no such "weaknesses." She was Elektra, an assassin for hire wielding three-pronged daggers (called sai), first seen in Marvel's *Daredevil* #168 (1981). Elektra Natchios, like many fictional characters, survived the death (in her case, the political assassination) of a parent, her father, a Greek ambassador, and redirected her life as a result. Instead of fighting crime, as Batman did once his parents were killed, Elektra chose execution, a reaction catering perfectly to what historian Robbins called America's "get tough on crime mood" of the 1980s. As a paid killer, she sought out and eliminated the worst of the worst, and while her marks were generally criminals, her methods were decidedly anti-heroic. She captivated the audience of the early 1980s, and has commanded a steady presence in comics ever since.

Actress Jennifer Garner was cast as Elektra in the live-action movie *Daredevil* (2003), and then in an *Elektra* (2005) solo film. Garner's physical prowess, honed pre-Elektra by her acrobatics on her television series *Alias* (2001–2006), impressed her *Daredevil* costars: "She did this stunt where she kicks off the wall and does this split, and I was ready to marry that woman right there," gushed actor Michael Clarke Duncan to *TV Guide* in 2003.

Comics publishers didn't realize at the time that the emergence of Elektra signaled the end of cheery, colorful superheroines. DC's *Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld,* part-superhero, part-Alice in Wonderland, enjoyed an initial blip of success, then cascaded to cancellation. Syndicated TV's animated *She-Ra: Princess of Power* (1985–1988) experienced a similar fate. Marvel's preteen supergroup Power Pack also contained two girls in its cast. Like *Amethyst, Power Pack* was critically embraced, but did not connect commercially with an audience large enough to sustain its publication (though it hung on for seven years, an impressive feat in an increasingly depressed market). Later, in the 1990s, writer/artist Sarah Dyer introduced her teenage superheroine, Action Girl, and her friends, whose uplifting adventures provided a very refreshing departure from the very adult-themed mainstream superheroine fare of the day.

Conversely, superheroines with a darker edge netted higher returns. Marvel's Dagger, of the team Cloak and Dagger, attacked evildoers with piercing shards of light. Spider-Man soon cavorted with the Black Cat (not the original Harvey character), a naughty but vivacious thief, and the Invisible Girl was liberated to become the Invisible Woman, and temporarily became a supervillainess named Malice. While Marvel's 1980s superheroines got tougher, so did women in the real world: Self-defense classes were the rage.

During the 1980s, some fans accused DC Comics of misogyny due to its treatment of its superheroines. Supergirl was killed (beaten to death, incidentally), Wonder Woman was erased from existence in 1986 (but was resurrected the next year), Black Canary was criminally assaulted in *Green Arrow: The Longbow Hunters* (1987), and Batgirl (Barbara Gordon) was debased and crippled by the psychotic villain the Joker, in *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988). (She finally regained her ability to walk in 2011.) Other DC superheroines became decoration, like Fire and Ice in the pages of *Justice League America,* important more for sex appeal than story substance.

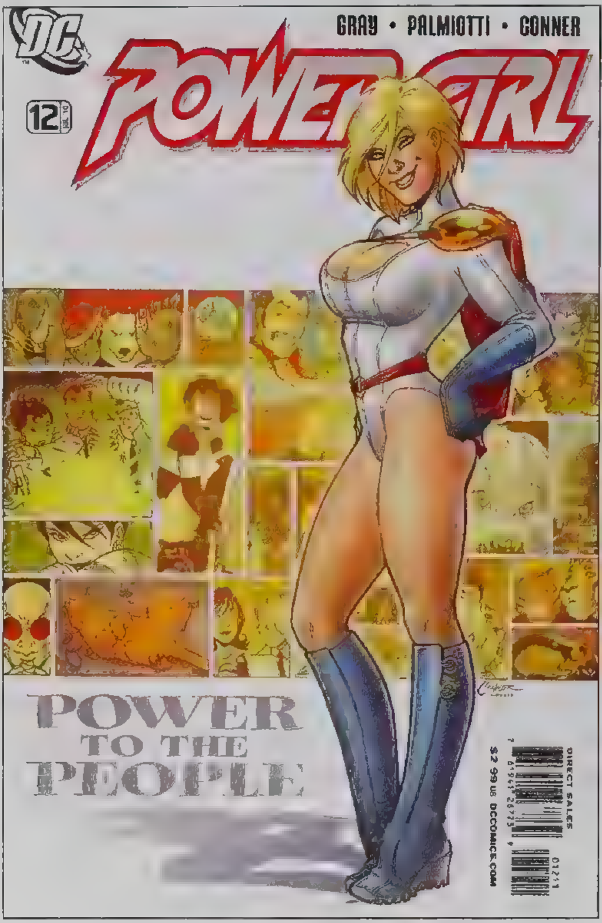
GOOD GIRLS GO BAD

In 1992, Michelle Pfeiffer's mesmerizing turn as Catwoman, in director Tim Burton's *Batman*

Returns, popularized the concept of a "bad girl" heroine. Pfeiffer's Catwoman was fundamentally a villainess, but while her motivations were antiheroic, her plight was sympathetic. Deep down she had a soft spot, questioning her actions against Batman as she fell for his true identity of Bruce Wayne. Her alter ego Selina Kyle was battered and abused, but as the sultry Catwoman she took charge, letting no man interfere with her goal—revenge against her male tormentor. Pfeiffer's allure made Catwoman the sexiest screen character of the year. As Catwoman she carried the torch lit by Elektra and helped transform the superheroine: Superwomen could now have looks *that* kill, and the power to kill.

Post–*Batman Returns,* the comic book business—which once avoided superheroines in starring roles—has produced dozens of titles with sexually-exaggerated women in the lead (a survey of DC and Marvel comic book titles published in September 2003 included a remarkable sixteen titles [not including superteams] starring women). Many have shamelessly parroted Elektra, even equipping their characters with knives, swords, and mystical gauntlets: Avengelyne, Glory, Cyblade, Witchblade, and Shi. Other such characters have fortified themselves with an arsenal: Ghost, Tank Girl, Shotgun Mary, Barb Wire, and Silver Sable. Still others use supernatural powers to stop or eradicate their foes: Lady Death, Darkchylde, and Vampirella (a mainstream comics revival of the extraterrestrial blood-sucker from Warren Comics' legendary 1970s line of magazine-sized, ostensibly mature nonsuperhero titles). Not all contemporary superheroines kill, but some of them come dangerously close. Even Wonder Woman has developed a warrior's edge.

Beautiful "bad girl" protagonists with martial arts mastery have transcended comics into mass media omnipresence. Video games are filled with them, most notably Lara Croft of *Tomb Raider* fame. Sexy "action heroines" have replaced the Arnold Schwarzenegger/Bruce Willis action hero archetype in 2000s cinema. These action heroines are not superheroines in the strictest sense of the word, but—thanks to wires and special-effects wizardry—they display spellbinding feats of superheroics: Witness Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, and Lucy Liu in the *Charlie's Angels* movies; Angelina Jolie in the *Tomb Raider* film franchise; Carrie-Anne Moss as Trinity in *The Matrix* series; Uma Thurman as a vengeful bride in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003) and *Vol. 2* (2004); and Halle Berry, stepping beyond her Storm role to upstage James Bond as Jinx in *Die Another Day* (2002), and then succeeding Michelle Pfeiffer as *Catwoman* (2004). Numerous live-action television series have featured "chicks who kick," like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Xena Warrior Princess, Dark Angel,* and the comics-based *Birds of Prey* and *Witchblade.* Aggressive superheroines have also invaded the world of children's pop culture, particularly in the case of the Cartoon Network's *Powerpuff Girls,* who usually level the city of Townsville in their violent efforts to "save" it.



Power Girl #12 © 2010 DC Comics. (Cover art by Amanda Conner.)

Contemporary comic abounds with mainstream and independent superheroines. Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' critically acclaimed series *Watchmen* (1986–1987), and its movie

Aaron Johnson, Chloe Moretz, and Nicolas Cage in a scene from the 2010 film *Kick-Ass*. (Marv Films / The Kobal Collection.)

adaptation (2009), feature the original Silk Spectre, a character inspired by 1940s pin-up superheroines such as Phantom Lady, and her daughter, the second Silk Spectre, who reflects the more modern feminist wave of superheroines. Mark Millar and John Romita, Jr.'s *Kick-Ass* comics series (2008), which was adapted into a 2010 movie, controversially featured Hit-Girl, a violent and foul-mouthed girl, who was a subversive variation on the "kid sidekick" archetype. In 2010, Go-Go's guitarist Jane Wiedlin and artist Bill Morrison introduced their comics character Lady Robotika, a rock star who becomes the superpowered champion of cyborg slaves against their alien masters. On TV, actress Julie Benz played Stephanie Powell, a woman with the power to move at superspeed, on the ABC television series *No Ordinary Family* (2010), and Maggie Q portrayed rogue assassin Nikita, in The CW network series of the same name.

Since the latter decades of the twentieth century, men (enlightened men, that is) have grown less threatened by the concept of powerful women. In the case of superheroines, titillation has been employed as an incentive to attract the support of males. Some comic book covers featuring superheroines border on softcore pornography, with impossibly proportioned women in pin-up poses. Indeed, a subculture has developed that regards the superheroine as a sex object, attested to by a host of websites featuring photos of partially clad actresses in costumes.

Those extremes aside, superheroines have, like real life women, clawed their way from subservience to prominence. Should future cultural climes alter the societal position of women, the characterization of superheroines will naturally follow. *—ME & GM*

Superman

Superman is widely regarded as the first superhero. That's not entirely true: The Shadow, the Phantom, Doc Savage, the Spider, and a handful of others preceded him in the mid-1930s. Those costumed or superpowered crime fighters may have beaten Superman out of the gate, but not to the punch. This "Man of Steel" and his astounding abilities caught an unsuspecting readership by surprise in 1938. Generations later, Superman has become indelibly etched into the annals of American folklore. Today, most historians call Superman the first superhero because he defined a distinct hero type, clearly breaking away from the masked adventurers who preceded him.

Superman's origin is nearly as recognizable as the hero himself. Moments before the planet Krypton explodes, its chief scientist rockets his infant son to safety. The baby's spaceship lands on Earth and is discovered by the Kents, a childless couple that adopt the tiny extraterrestrial. The boy exhibits astonishing powers, and the Kents teach the lad, whom they name Clark, to use his abilities to "assist humanity." Upon adulthood (and the death of his Earth parents), Clark Kent dons a caped uniform as Superman, "champion of the oppressed."

This tale was first revealed in *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938), published while the United States was in the stranglehold of the Great Depression. In his earliest outings, Superman was enormously brazen as he caved in walls, slapped dictators, and spanked sharp-tongued heiresses. By stark contrast, his alter ego, the bespectacled Kent, was outrageously diffident, and on this dichotomy hinged the hero's audience appeal: Kent was the downtrodden "everyman," while Superman personified physical power. Superman was an unabashed intimidator you could cheer for, a figure of hope when many Americans felt hopeless. Readers found in Superman a hero who represented "truth, justice, and the American way," and his colorful escapades, told in the vibrant new medium of comic books, captured their imaginations. Superman not only initiated his own career with *Action* #1, but single-handedly launched a new industry—comic book publishers sprouted instantly, and scores of new superheroes followed, truly exemplifying the "American way" (capitalism).

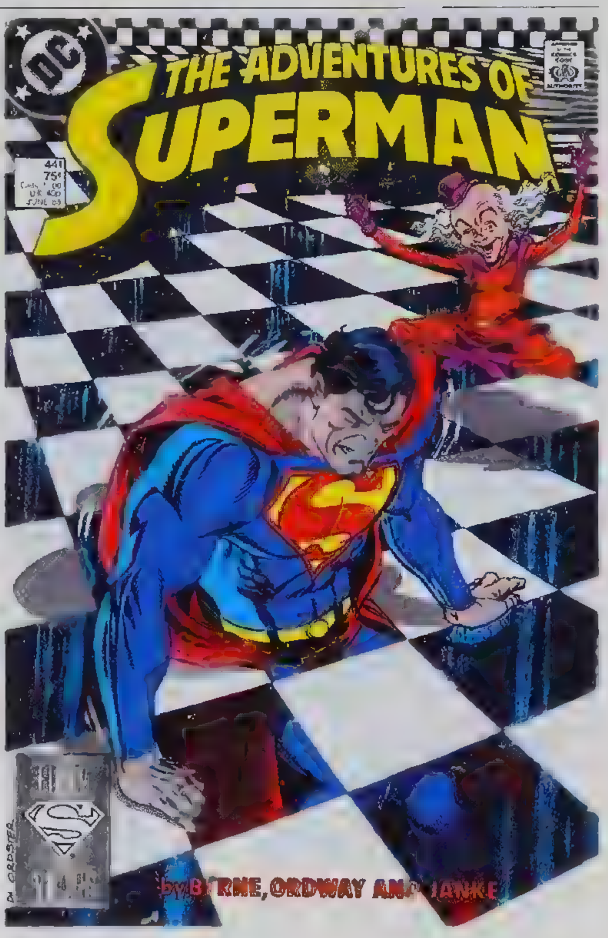
And to think, Superman started on the wrong side of the law. Throughout the early 1930s, his creators, author Jerry Siegel and illustrator Joe Shuster, high school chums from Cleveland, Ohio, were habitually rejected by professional publishers. So they started their own mimeographed fanzine, *Science Fiction*, in which they printed Siegel's prose story "The Reign of the Superman," about a misshapen human who acquires superpowers and turns evil. Siegel and Shuster later modified the concept into a proposal for a newspaper strip, featuring a caped Superman with an "S" on his massive chest, who uses his powers—augmented strength and stamina, bulletproof skin, and the ability to leap an eighth of a mile—for good. They ambitiously marketed their creation as "The Smash Hit Strip of 1936," but the syndicates balked. Maintaining unwavering faith in their concept, the persevering pair submitted their Superman idea to comic book publisher Detective Comics, Inc. (DC), who took a chance on the property for their start-up title, *Action*. Siegel and Shuster sold DC the rights to Superman for a reported pittance of $130, but they didn't mind—it was a gig, and, most importantly, their hero was in print.

Action Comics starring Superman sold phenomenally well, and DC Comics wasted no time in exploiting the character. In January 1939, Siegel and Shuster realized their earlier dream by producing a Superman syndicated newspaper strip. Distributed by the McClure Syndicate, the feature ran successfully through the 1940s. Siegel and Shuster (before turning the reigns over to writer/artist Wayne Boring in 1940) expanded the hero's origin by giving the baby a Kryptonian name (Kal-L, later Kal-El), and by naming his biological parents (Jor-L and Lora, later Jor-El and Lara). The Man of Steel was awarded his own title with *Superman* #1 (Summer 1939), and soon began appearing in *World's Best Comics* (later *World's Finest*). In a few short years, Superman rocketed into ubiquity. DC introduced a "Supermen of America" fan club and licensed the character's likeness to manufacturers of toys, puzzles, novels, coloring books, bubble gum—almost every product imaginable. The Man of Steel burst into radio in 1940, in the long-running *The Adventures of Superman* program, with actor Bud Collyer lending voice to the hero, and into movie theaters in 1941, in a celebrated series of seventeen animated shorts from the Fleischer Studios. Superman became big business. Some joked that the "S" emblazoned across his chest should be changed to a "$."

Superman's superpowers grew with his acclaim: Soon he was flying instead of leaping, he became invulnerable, and supersenses like X-ray vision and superhearing were added. Of course, every hero needs a weakness, and Superman's was kryptonite, radioactive meteorites from his homeworld, a story element that first appeared on his radio program. He quickly developed a rogues' gallery including Lex Luthor, the Ultra-Humanite, and the Prankster. Upon the advent of World War II, Superman was anointed as DC Comics' standard-bearer of patriotism, and on several occasions even took on the Axis forces.

Superman's Kent identity was Siegel and Shuster's in-joke. As a reporter for the *Daily Planet* (originally the *Daily Star*) in the city of Metropolis, Kent frequently winked at his readers to acknowledge that *they* were in on the gag (the first comic book hero to do this, by the way): that the people around him couldn't see through his flimsy disguise of eyeglasses and a business suit. His spunky colleague Lois Lane wasn't fooled for long, however. Suspicious over Kent's disappearances during Superman's feats, she spent decades unsuccessfully trying to prove that Kent and Superman were one and the same. Kent's association with the newspaper placed him on the ground floor of breaking events in which Superman's presence might be required—and often that meant rescuing the daring Lane from danger. Kent's boss in the earliest tales was George Taylor, who soon morphed into crusty managing editor Perry White, a cigar-chomping, old-school newshound, often agitated by the antics of his staff. Jimmy Olsen, a copy boy (and later "cub reporter") whose enthusiasm frequently got him into trouble, became famous as Superman's pal.

Most superheroes withered from view after World War II, but the Man of Steel kept going strong. In 1945, DC amended its continuity with the creation of Superboy, in "The Adventures of Superman When He Was a Boy." His wholesome adventures took place in Smallville, a geographical slice of America's heartland, where young Kent lived with his parents, Jonathan and Martha. Neighbor Lana Lang was introduced as the teenage equivalent of Lois Lane. Meanwhile actor Kirk Alyn brought Superboy's adult counterpart to life in a pair of live-action movie serials, *Superman* (1948) and *Atom-Man vs. Superman* (1950), the latter of which adapted Luthor to the big screen. During this period of super-profit, Siegel and Shuster lost a legal battle to regain the rights to their creation.

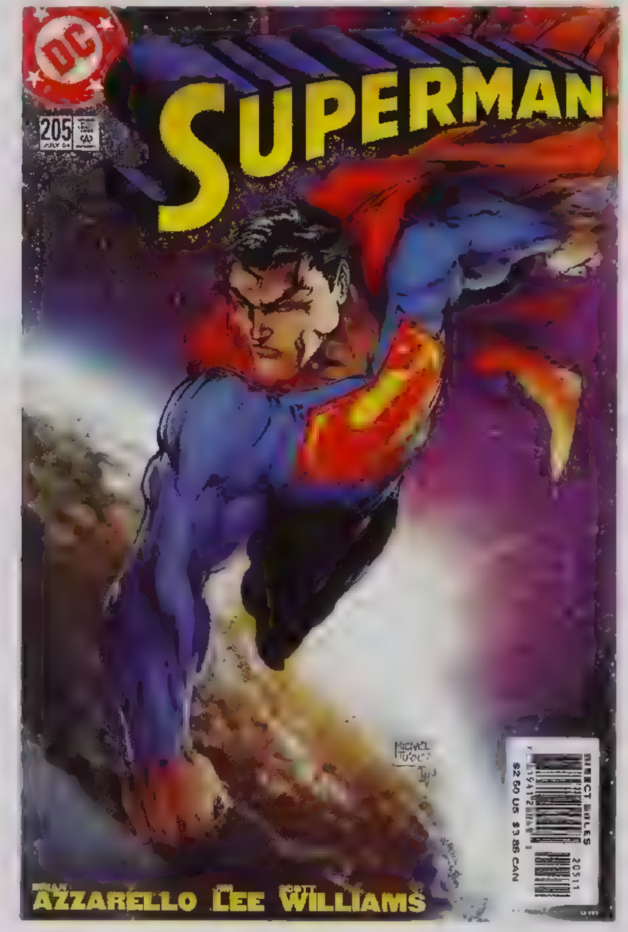


The Adventures of Superman #441 © 1988 DC Comics. (Cover art by Jerry Ordway.)

In the 1950s, as Americans enjoyed postwar prosperity and pride, Superman was redefined from the burly bully of comics' Golden Age (1938–1954) into a helpful scoutmaster, instilling virtues into the childish Lane and Olsen—and the readers. Actor George Reeves, who portrayed the Man of Steel in the live-action theatrical release *Superman and the Mole Men* (1951), starred in the movie's syndicated television spinoff *The Adventures of Superman* (1953–1957). Reeves became beloved in the role: He pitched Kellogg's

Corn Flakes as Superman and appeared on *I Love Lucy* as the Man of Steel. (Who could forget the episode in which he flies in to save Lucy from her high-rise widow-ledge shenanigans?) A *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen* comics title was launched in 1954, followed by *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* in 1958, and Superman and Batman formed a regular partnership in *World's Finest*. Superman was also developing a family—enter the family superdog, Krypto—another survivor of the hero's homeworld. The Man of Steel was DC Comics' best-selling and flagship character, so important to the publisher that it changed its company logo to "Superman–DC Comics." As the decade closed, the atomic age zapped science fiction into a place of prominence in Superman's comics: Luthor flourished high-tech weapons against the Man of Steel; new villains like the android Brainiac were established; the time-traveling Legion of Super-Heroes joined the supporting cast; and Superman's cousin, Supergirl, showed up in a Kryptonian spaceship.

The 1960s were a turbulent decade of escalating global tension, civil unrest, a bloody and unpopular war, and social disorder, but for much of the decade, Superman turned a blind eye to it all (tough to do with his super-*vision*). Mort Weisinger, editor of the Superman comics, continued to expand the Man of Steel's family: Joining the already cumbersome cast were mermaid Lori Lemaris; loopy inventor Professor Potter; superpets Beppo the Supermonkey, Streaky the Supercat, and Comet the Superhorse; Superman's biological parents Jor-El and Lara (via frequent flashbacks and time-travel tales); Kryptonian survivors in the Phantom Zone and in the miniaturized Bottle City of Kandor; and a whole world of wacky Superman mutates called Bizarros. Traces of the real world occasionally crept into his comics—President John F. Kennedy's assassination was too big for even Weisinger's Super-sanitized Man of Steel to ignore—but mostly, the Superman titles offered an escape from, not an exploration of, political issues. And no one seemed to mind: Superman's fame reached global status, as translations of his comic books were being gobbled up in numerous countries.



Superman #205 © 2004 DC Comics. (Cover art by Michael Turner.)

By the mid-1960s, Curt Swan's crisp penciling style helped him emerge from a pack of talented illustrators as "the" Superman artist, a title Swan held until the 1980s. Superman's comics may have *looked* good, but they didn't *read* well: The burgeoning ensemble of superpeople and superanimals was neutering the hero's individuality. Weisinger and his writers were running out of ideas, resorting to gimmicks rather than characterization for Superman's adventures. "Imaginary" stories—tales appearing outside of the regular continuity—became commonplace, allowing Superman to die, to marry, and to have offspring, but return to the status quo with the next adventure. His superpowers intensified to a ridiculous level: Superman gained microscopic vision, heat vision (previously he had melted objects with the heat from his X-ray vision), and even super*ventriloquism*! As Superman's faculties increased, his enemies simply could not pose a credible threat, and his stories lost dramatic intensity. Only the energy-siphoning Parasite, the creation of writer Jim Shooter, gave Superman a run for his money, but he surfaced too late to stop the hero who was "more powerful than a locomotive" from derailing. By the end of the decade, Superman's adventures had grown stale and his titles' readership had dwindled. Similarly, the *Superman* newspaper strip was canceled in 1967.

Carmine Infantino, former artist of *The Flash* and *Batman,* had recently been appointed DC's editorial director and was revitalizing the company's line. The Man of Steel was slated for an overhaul, with editor Julius Schwartz, who had successfully resuscitated the Batman titles from near-cancellation in 1964, assigned to helm the revisions. In 1970, DC house ads trumpeted an impending change: "There's a New Kind of Superman Coming!" *Superman* #233 (January 1971) was where it began: Kent, now bolder and hipper, became a *television* news reporter, kryptonite was eliminated, and Superman's powers were weakened. Pioneering young writers like Denny O'Neil, Elliot S! Maggin, and Cary Bates invigorated the tales with realism and new villains. None of this mattered to the world at large, however, where Superman's status was now iconic: His "S" insignia was appropriated by the lead character (a Christ allegory) in the rock opera *Godspell* (1971); singer Jim Croce immortalized the Man of Steel as a tough guy in his 1973 hit, "You Don't Mess around with Jim" (with the recurring line, "You don't tug on Superman's cape"); and Superman was featured as one of television's animated *Super Friends* (1973).

Halfway through the 1970s, two major events occurred: DC joined forces with competitor Marvel Comics to co-publish a best-selling crossover, *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man;* and film producers Alexander and Ilya Salkind signed a deal to produce a big-budget movie (and a sequel) starring the Man of Steel. The impending film and its promise of profit inspired Neal Adams, superstar illustrator and advocate for artists' rights, to lobby DC to provide financial restitution to Superman's architects, Siegel and Shuster, both of whom teetered on the brink of destitution. DC and parent company Warner Bros. obliged, bowing to media pressure; they established pensions for both and inserted their names into all Superman comics as the creators of the character. In 1977, as part of a promotional campaign for the upcoming motion picture, the *Superman* newspaper strip was revived, beginning a sixteen-year run. The Salkinds' *Superman: The Movie* was the blockbuster film of 1978: It made actor Christopher Reeve a megastar and raised the special effects bar by several notches.

As with any successful film, sequels followed, and the first half of the 1980s for Superman was demarcated by Reeve's interpretation of the hero—the Man of Steel as a "friend," a sincere Boy Scout who never told a lie, earning his merit badge by saving the world. Editor Schwartz's Superman comics suffered during this period. The radical changes he implemented in the early and mid-1970s had been jettisoned, and the resulting stories were reminiscent of the material he'd been hired to eliminate. Superman needed a shot in the arm.

As DC Comics reinvented itself in the mid-1980s with its continuity-altering *Crisis on Infinite Earths* series (in which Supergirl died valiantly), Marvel Comics writer/artist John Byrne was hired to recreate the hero. Byrne's opening volley was *The Man of Steel* (1986), a six-issue, biweekly miniseries that cleaned the slate for the character, while preserving the best aspects from previous incarnations (mostly the movies). Superboy was no more, Krypton was antiseptic, and Luthor became the 1980s version of evil incarnate—a corporate CEO. Byrne's Reeve-like Superman would kick ass when necessary. There were also significant changes involving Kent's personal life, perhaps the biggest being that his parents, Jonathan and Martha, were now still alive, lending compassionate support to their adult super-son.

Since Superman's 1986 reintroduction, an army of writers, artists, and editors have expanded upon the revised mythology, reintroducing classic concepts and characters (with new twists) and introducing potentially lethal menaces to imperil the Man of Steel, usually in lengthy and sometimes inaccessible story arcs. Three highly publicized events affected the character in the 1990s: his January 1993 death (at

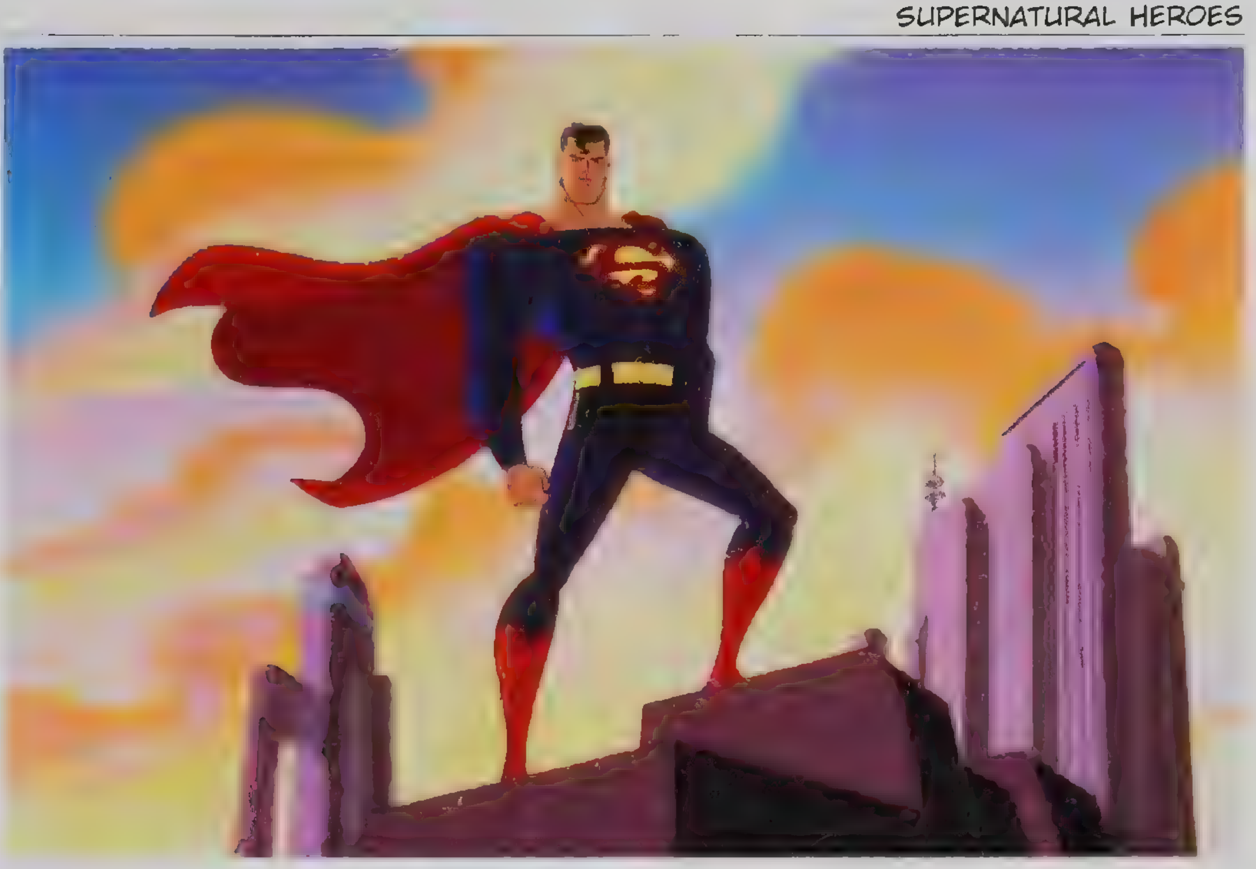
The late Christopher Reeve in his first appearance as Superman in 1978's *Superman: The Movie*. (Warner Bros./DC Comics / The Kobal Collection.)

the hands of a brutish behemoth appropriately called Doomsday) in *Superman* #75 and subsequent resurrection (surprise!); his controversial transformation into a pure energy being with a different costume than the bankable classic (another headline-grabbing but short-lived innovation); and Kent's 1996 marriage to Lois Lane in *Superman: The Wedding Album* #1.

Since *The Man of Steel,* Superman has maintained a consistent television presence: in two animated *Superman* cartoons (in 1988 and 1996), and on the Cartoon Network's *Justice League* (2001–2004) and *Justice League Unlimited* (2004–2006); in the live-action programs *Superboy* (1988–1992), *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (1993–1997), and the teen-oriented *Smallville* (2001–2011); and as a regular topic of discussion among the characters of the 1990s sitcom *Seinfeld.* His movie prospects haven't fared as well since the failure of Reeve's *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (1987). The revival of the Superman movie franchise has passed through multiple hands.

In recent years, DC Comics has repeatedly revisited, retold, and presented a variety of revised or alternative versions of Superman's origin and early career, including Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale's *Superman for All Seasons* (1998), and Mark Waid and Leinil Francis Yu's *Superman: Birthright* (2003–2004). Writers Kurt Busiek, Fabian Nicieza, and Geoff Johns collaborated on a new canonical origin story in *Action Comics* #850 (2007); Johns and artist Gary Frank then did the more elaborate *Superman: Secret Origin* (2009–2010). This was followed by J. Michael Straczynski and Shane Davis's alternative history in *Superman: Earth One* (2010). Writer Grant Morrison and artist Frank Quitely created the acclaimed series *All Star Superman* (2005–2008), an alternative to the official continuity: not only were Clark and Lois not married, but Morrison devised contemporary variations on various concepts from Mort Weisinger's Silver Age *Superman* stories.

Superman has also been regularly appearing in direct-to-video animated films, including *Superman: Doomsday* (2007), based on the "Death of Superman" saga; *Justice League: The New Frontier* (2008), based on Darwyn Cooke's acclaimed comics; *Superman/Batman: Public Enemies* (2009); *Superman/Batman: Apocalypse* (2010); and *All-Star Superman* (2011), based on Grant Morrison's series. Bryan Singer, director of the first two *X-Men* movies, directed the 2008 film, appropriately titled, *Superman Returns*. It was intended as a sequel to Richard Donner's *Superman and Superman II,* and starred newcomer



The second animated TV series *Superman* ran from 1996 to 2000. (Warner Bros. / The Kobal Collection.)

Brandon Routh as Superman, Kate Bosworth as Lois Lane, and Kevin Spacey (from Singer's film *The Usual Suspects*) as Lex Luthor. The movie did not perform commercially up to Warner Bros.' expectations, and the studio canceled its plans for Singer to direct a sequel. Instead, Warner Bros. turned to Christopher Nolan, the director of the extraordinarily successful relaunch of the *Batman* film franchise with *Batman Begins* (2005) and *The Dark Knight* (2008). The result is that Nolan produced the film *The Man of Steel*, directed by Zack Snyder (who directed the 2009 *Watchmen* movie), which reboots the Superman saga on film, with an expected release of late 2013.

In September 2011, DC Comics relaunched its entire line of comics, including starting *Action Comics* and *Superman* over with issue 1. The new *Superman* series was initially written by George Perez, with art by Perez and Jesus Merino, and the new *Action* was launched by writer Grant Morrison and artist Rags Morales. The early issues of the new *Action* provide yet another reworking of Superman's early career. This may be significant in light of a recent legal decision.

In 1999, a legal ruling granted the heirs of Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel fifty percent of the Superman copyright. Then in 2009, another court ruling decreed that the Siegel estate had recaptured rights to the Superman material in the original *Action Comics* #1 (1938), including the first version of his origin. The estate of Joe Shuster (he has no heirs) will legally recapture their share of the rights to the same material in 2013. At that point, the Siegel and Shuster estates will own the entire copyright to the *Superman* story in the original *Action Comics* #1, and could license and publish their own version of Superman. The long-range effects of this decision on the future of Superman, in comics and other media, remain to be seen. —*ME & PS*

Supernatural Heroes

When the dark forces of the underworld threaten to scare up trouble for humankind, paranormal protectors—many with modus operandi drawing from the same sinister sources as their enemies'—stand ready to vanquish vampires, demons, and wizards.

King Features' Mandrake the Magician, an illusionist sporting a top hat and tails, first used his mystical attributes to fight crime in the June 11, 1934 unveiling of his long-running newspaper strip. Over the decades Mandrake and his assistant, Lothar, have appeared in a 1939 movie serial, Big Little Books, comic books, a 1979 TV movie, and the animated series *Defenders of the Earth* (1986). DC Comics' debut of Dr. Occult predated the industry's eminent Golden Age (1938–1954). Originating in 1935, this amulet-wearing investigator of the arcane has materialized off and on in DC's titles over the decades but has never achieved tremendous acclaim. Dr. Occult's creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, scored a larger success with their next character, Superman, first seen in *Action Comics* #1 (1938), the same issue that introduced Zatara the Magician, the crime-fighting showman who voiced backward incantations ("raeppasid" for"disappear").

In 1940, Egyptian Prince Amentep emerged from a four-thousand-year sleep to become Fawcett's Ibis the Invincible, the red-turbaned titan who wielded a magic wand—his Ibistick—against evil. A chilling superheroine named Madame Satan had a short lifespan, in 1941, at the publisher that would ultimately be known for its squeaky-clean characters—Archie Comics—and Fox Features Syndicates' the Wraith, a ghostly guardian parroting DC's successful supernatural hero, the Spectre, faded from view after a mere five stories that same year. Other supernatural superheroes seen during the 1940s were Dr. Fate, Mr. Mystic, and Sargon the Sorcerer.

Another hero that emerged during this period is Johnny Thunder, who debuted in *Flash Comics* #1 (January 1940). As an infant Johnny was given possession of the Thunderbolt, a magical being like a genie. Johnny grew up and accidentally discovered that by saying the magic word Cei-U ("Say you"), he could summon the Thunderbolt to do his bidding. Johnny's adventures tended to be humorous: he was not particularly bright, but he had a good heart, and he even became a member of the Justice Society of America. (In recent years Johnny died, but his consciousness lives on as part of the Thunderbolt. A young African American, Jakeem Thunder, who debuted in Flash #134, February 1998, is the Thunderbolt's new master, controlling him by saying "So Cul" ["So cool"].)

Horror comics were the rage in the early 1950s, evidenced by gruesome anthology titles like EC Comics' *Tales from the Crypt*. During this trend, the Phantom Stranger, a trench-coated enigma who guided passersby through the supernatural realm first appeared in a short-lived series bearing his name. The Phantom Stranger returned to his own title from 1969 to 1976—and continues to wander in and out of various DC titles.

DC's jungle adventurer Congo Bill goes all the way back to *More Fun Comics* #56 (June 1940), but his fate changed weirdly in the 1950s. In *Action Comics* #248 (January 1959), he first rubbed a magic ring that caused him to switch minds with a powerful gorilla with golden fur. Thus he became Congorilla, who starred in a backup series in *Action Comics* and later *Adventure Comics*. He even stared in his own comics miniseries in 1994 and 1999. After his human body died, Congo Bill's mind lived on in the legendary Golden Gorilla, and as Congorilla he even became a member of the Justice League in 2009.

The content sanitization of comics, in the wake of mid-1950s U.S. Senate subcommittee hearings, temporarily retired most supernatural references. Two of DC's spooky heroes eventually resurfaced in the 1960s: the Spectre returned in 1966 and spun off into a ten-issue run of his own title, and Dr. Fate received occasional outings in the pages of *Justice League of America*. Marvel's master of the mystic arts, Doctor Strange, first peered into his all-seeing Eye of Agamatto in 1963, fending off magical menaces like Baron Mordo. DC's Deadman, originating in 1967, was circus aerialist Boston Brand before an assassin's bullet ended his life and began his postmortem quest: to find his killer. And Zatara's daughter, Zatanna, surfaced in the 1960s, eventually joining the Justice League of America, equipped with her own backward-spoken spells. While dealing with matters mystical, these 1960s creepy crusaders were squarely rooted in the mainstream.

In the 1970s, the Comics Code Authority censorship board eased its restrictions against occult references, and a plethora of paranormal heroes crawled forth. DC revived the Spectre (again) in the pages of *Adventure Comics,* pushing graphic storytelling to its limits with the hero's bloodcurdling means of disposing of criminals, including dismemberment by giant scissors and transmutation into mannequins. Legendary comics artist Jack Kirby expanded DC's mystical mythos in 1972 with *The Demon,* a series starring demonologist Jason Blood. Blood, an immortal, is the human host to Etrigan, a chaotic, yellow-skinned devil, who once served in the court of Camelot. Channeled by Blood through an incantation, the Demon speaks in rhyme and has fought magical threats in myriad appearances, including team-ups with Batman.

Marvel Comics embraced the macabre with a host of horrifying heroes, all bowing in the 1970s, including the Ghost Rider, the flame-headed motorcyclist/superhero who gave a new definition to the term "Hell's Angel"; Moon Knight, Marvel's answer to DC's Batman; the half-man/half-vampire Blade, who has headlined a successful franchise of live-action movies from the late 1990s to the present; Brother Voodoo, an African American character mixing Hougan mysticism and superheroics; and the Son of Satan, a.k.a. Daimon Hellstrom, who, with a pentagram birthmark on his chest and a trident that emitted "soul fire" in hand, waged war against his unholy father.

Beginning in the 1980s, "real-world" society grew more violent, and the supernatural heroes of popular fiction followed suit. Perhaps no character better exemplifies this than creator James O'Barr's bleak angel of vengeance, Eric Draven, popularly known as the Crow. In the character's 1989 origin from Caliber Comics, the mortally wounded Draven watches helplessly as his fiancée is brutalized and murdered by street punks. The trauma of this event prohibits him from resting in the afterlife, and on the first anniversary of his death he is resuscitated by a crow and given paranormal abilities, including an empathic touch and augmented agility, in a mission of vengeance against those who cut short his life. His iniquitous methods have transcended his cult-favorite comic book and have been adapted to cinema via a franchise of films beginning with *The Crow* (1994), and a syndicated TV series, *The Crow: Stairway to Heaven* (1998).

Top Cow Productions' NYPD detective Sara Pezzini was first seen in 1995, on an implacable expedition to destroy the mobster who ritualistically eliminated those closest to her. Once she unearthed Joan of Arc's enchanted gauntlet—called the witchblade—Pezzini donned the glove and symbiotically bonded with it. As Witchblade, she wielded the glove's powers—the creation of daggers, the deflection of bullets, and an extrasensory perception—in a brutal vendetta against organized crime. A live-action *Witchblade* TV movie (2000) and weekly cable series (2001–2002) starred Yancy Butler.

Mitchell Shelley is the Resurrection Man, who can be killed, but then returns to life within moments, gaining a different superpower each time he is resurrected. Created by writers Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, and artist Jackson Guice, he first appeared in *Resurrection Man* #1 (May 1997). His abilities have been ascribed to nanotechnology, However, it has been established that the Resurrection Man has existed since the days of cavemen, so there must be another explanation for his powers, perhaps the supernatural. Abnett, Lanning, and artist Fernando Dagnino collaborated on DC 's new *Resurrection Man* series that launched in September 2011.

Characters such as the Crow, Witchblade, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer are non-masked fighters that elevate the classic concept of the superhero to a more realistic level, despite their fantastical settings. "Buffy could be seen as qualifying as a superhero," wrote Peter Coogan in his 2002 dissertation "The Secret Origin of the Superhero." Coogan also observed, "She has a mission; she has superpowers; Buffy has an identity as the Slayer." (Marvel has its own analogue to Buffy: Elsa Bloodstone, a superstrong young woman who hunts monsters; she debuted in *Bloodstone,* in 2001, and counts Frankenstein's Monster as her ally.) Buffy and her supernatural ilk—Steven Hughes' Lady Death, Dark Horse's Ghost, and DC's Vertigo heroes (Sandman, Death, Hellblazer, and Preacher)—have reinvented the concept of the dark hero for a new generation. *—ME & PS*

Superpatriots

Marvel Comics' shield-slinging Captain America is, bar none, the most famous of the star-spangled freedom fighters known as the superpatriots. But he was not the first superhero to wear the colors of Old Glory.

The Shield was the first superpatriot. *Pep Comics* #1 (January 1940) introduced Joe Higgins, a man who avenges his father's murder by applying dad's secret formula "SHIELD" (an acronym for Sacrum, Heart, Innveration, Eyes, Lungs, and Derma) to his skin. The formula is activated when Higgins wears a specially designed outfit—which just happens to be star-spangled—that boosts his strength, speed, and stamina, making him the Axis-busting superhero, the Shield. The Eagle promptly parroted the Shield by flying into print in *Science* #1 (February 1940). Secretly Bill Powers, the Eagle, dressed in a blue suit with a golden eagle chest logo and red-and-white striped cape, fights the Nazis and their American sympathizers. Manowar, a superpatriot *android,* also premiered in February 1940, in *Target Comics* #1.

Uncle Sam—*the* Uncle Sam, the top-hat-wearing, white-goateed icon painted by James Montgomery Flagg in his immortal military recruitment poster—became a superhero in *National Comics* #1 (July 1940), in a tale by Will Eisner, creator of The Spirit. Imbued with patriotism-induced superstrength, Sam is more than a match for Nazis and saboteurs. *Uncle Sam,* a 1997 miniseries published under DC Comics' Vertigo imprint, features a dispirited Sam, muttering madly as the America he once knew has fallen apart.

Private Jack Weston was a true patriot, but not a *superpowered* one, which did not deter his zeal: In a red-and-white-striped shirt with blue sleeves dotted with white stars, he blazes onto the frontlines as Minute-Man, the "One Man Army," in *Master Comics* #11 (February 1941). One month later, in March 1941, comic book readers witnessed two flag-furled firsts: *Captain America* #1, by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, and *Feature Comics* #42's USA—"the Spirit of Old Glory"—the first star-spangled superheroine. Both debuted nine months before the United States entered World War II.

SUPERPATRIOTS FLOURISH

A survey of 1941 comic books would lead one to suspect that America was already at war. Publishers barraged readers with a surfeit of superpatriots, each clad in democratic duds that would warm Betsy Ross' heart. Some carried guns, some were supported by sidekicks or kid gangs, some were superstrong, and virtually all were indistinguishable from each other: the American Crusader; Captain Battle (dubbed the "One-Man Army," the difference from Minute-Man's moniker being a mere hyphen); Captain Courageous; Captain Fight ("America's #1 Defender"); Captain Flag; Captain Freedom (aided by the Young Defenders, a patriotic street gang); the Conqueror; the Defender (a Captain America clone by Cap's own creators, Simon and Kirby); and the Flag (who, as an infant, bore a U.S. flag birthmark, predestining his fate as a superpatriot).

Joining them were Flag Man, Lady Fairplay, the Liberator, Major Liberty, Major Victory, Man of War (who received a flaming sword from Mars, the god of war), Miss America (granted the superpower of matter alteration by the Statue of Liberty in *Military Comics* #1), Miss Victory (often spied winking and flashing the "V for victory" sign at her readers), Mister America, and the Patriot (joined by his girlfriend Miss Patriot). Also originating in 1941: "War Nurse" Pat Patriot (accompanied by the Girl Commandos, "five fearless freelance fighters of the United Nations"); the Sentinel; the Skyman; the Spirit of '76; the Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy (a kid hero with an adult partner); the Unknown Soldier; and the no-nonsense U.S. Jones (one of his earliest stories in *Wonderworld Comics* was titled "Traitors Die Fast!"). By the time Stormy Foster—a.k.a. "the Great Defender"—premiered in *Hit Comics* #18 (December 1941), all the good superpatriot costumes (and names) had been taken: Below the belt Foster wore white briefs with no leggings, looking as if he had left his pants at home. Another superpatriot debuting that same month had better fortune in fashion and longevity: Wonder Woman.

In *Startling Comics* #10 (1941), the Fighting Yank receives superpowers while wearing an ancestral cloak from the American Revolution. His tri-corner cap and buckle shoes differentiated him from other superpatriots. Likewise, from his first appearance in *Mystic Comics* #6, the Destroyer is clearly no average star-spangled hero. His grim blue face and piercing yellow eyes terrorize the Nazis, as does the foreboding white skull insignia on his black shirt. Many of the Destroyer's earliest stories were written by a teenage Stan Lee, who later became the driving force behind Marvel Comics.

More comic book superpatriots appeared after the United States entered the war: American Avenger, American Eagle, Captain Commando, Captain Red Blazer, Citizen V, Commando Yank, Crimebuster (a young hero), Liberty Belle, a different Miss America (this one from Timely/Marvel Comics, a female Captain America who remained in print for several years), the Phantom Eagle, Super-American, V-Man (with his young aides, the V-Boys), Yank and Doodle, Yankee Doodle Jones, Yankee Boy, Yankee Girl, and Yankee Eagle.

During this period, superpatriot sidekicks were common, including Dusty (partner of the Shield), Buddy (the Eagle), another Buddy (Uncle Sam), Bucky (Captain America), Dandy (Yankee Doodle Jones), Sparky (Captain Red Blaxer), and Rusty (Flag Man). Captain America and the Human Torch's sidekicks Bucky and Toro teamed up with four brave non-costumed kids as the Young Allies in 1941, battling the Axis powers around the world. The Axis could not stop any of these invincible superpatriots, but the end of World War II could. Peacetime almost instantaneously put them out of business, although some limped along until the early 1950s.

FROM RED, WHITE, AND BLUE TO RED SCARE

Pack leader *Captain America* suffered an ignoble fate in 1950, being ousted from his own series as it briefly became a horror comic (*Captain America's Weird Tales*), before being discontinued. Timely revived *Captain America,* in 1954, with a new agenda: fighting Communism, as Captain America, "Commie Smasher." Within several issues, however, the character and series were once again retired.

Yet Communism remained a new threat to explore in superhero comics, and the next superpatriot to combat it plied a different weapon: satire. With tongue rooted firmly in cheek, Simon and Kirby melted the cold war in Prize Comics' *Fighting American.* Issue #1 starts harshly, though, as an American Adonis, blunt-tongued broadcaster Johnny Flagg, is executed by Russian agents. The life force of Flagg's meek brother, Nelson, is transferred into his slain sibling's "revitalized and strengthened" body, and he resumes the Commie Smashing abandoned after *Captain America*'s cancellation. As the Fighting American, he and teenage sidekick, Speedboy, tackled broadly portrayed Red menaces like Super Khakalovich and Poison Ivan. During this era of rampant paranoia, however, *Fighting American*'s cavalier approach was rejected by readers and the series died after seven issues (though similar spoofs in the 1990s and 2000s, like AC Comics' retooled Fighting Yank and Alan Moore's First American, have shown that the strip was simply ahead of its time).

The next superpatriot to materialize bore a familiar name: the Shield. In Archie Comics' *The Double Life of Private Strong* #1 (1959), by Simon and Kirby, Army private Lancelot Strong ventures down three familiar superpatriotic paths: He is orphaned; his late father, a scientist, leaves behind data that helps Strong develop superpowers; and he adopts a red-white-and-blue supersuit and battles the United States' enemies. This Shield incarnation lasted a mere two issues.

Another superpatriot appeared in DC's Revolutionary War series, *Tomahawk* #81 (1962): Miss Liberty. In her debut tale, the "Frontier Heroine," clad in red, white, and blue, rescues the magazine's heroes, Tomahawk and Dan, from British soldiers by chucking explosive powder horns at the Redcoats. Miss Liberty stuck around as a member of the *Tomahawk* cast, off and on, throughout the 1960s.

SUPERPATRIOTS OF THE VIETNAM ERA

The Revolutionary War heroine Miss Liberty aside, superpatriots lay dormant for several years after the Shield's disappearance. America was embroiled in the controversial Vietnam War, and heroic characters could no longer rouse the nation's spirit. In Marvel Comics' *Avengers* #4 (1964), "Earth's mightiest heroes" discover the most famous superpatriot literally frozen in ice. Captain America is thawed into an uneasy existence as an anachronistic superpatriot (his "Commie Smasher" stint is conveniently forgotten). Cap's Archie Comics *doppelgänger,* the Shield, resurfaced again in *Mighty Crusaders* #1 (1965), this time as the son of the 1940s Shield. This version of the character enjoyed a brief blip of popularity during a superhero boom of the mid-1960s, but soon hung up his star-spangled togs. Meanwhile, Charlton Comics used the name Captain USA for a hero who could fly at the speed of light, in a one-shot tale in *Charlton Premiere* #3 (1968).

In the 1970s, Captain America (having mostly ignored Vietnam) diverted his attention to the urban streets, partnering with the African American superhero, the Falcon. In his essay "The Vietnam War and Comic Books," from James S. Olson's *The Vietnam War* (1993), scholar Bradford Wright observed, "The Captain America of the 1970s symbolized a nation, weary of confusing and painful overseas adventures, that had turned inward to confront serious domestic ills, brought on, in part, by a decade of war." Captain America soon rejected his patriotic persona, becoming Nomad, but before long was in the red, white, and blue once more.

The 1976 American bicentennial renewed interest in patriotism, but instead of wading into potentially polarizing waters, comic book publishers returned to safe ground: World War II, where the menace, the Axis, was clear. Captain America headlined Marvel's *The Invaders* (1975–1979), a series retrofitted into the 1940s; Uncle Sam joined other superheroes in a 1970s-set title called *Freedom Fighters* (1976–1978); and *Wonder Woman* temporarily published "untold" tales set during World War II, mimicking the setting of the then-popular television series starring the superheroine. DC also introduced a new title starring a 1940s superpatriot, *Steel the Indestructible Man,* lasting only five issues in 1978.

VIGILANTISM AND THE NEW SUPERPATRIOT

By 1980, American cynicism rooted in the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal had triggered a transformation: The anti-hero was displacing the altruistic caped crusader. Superheroes representing traditional values had no place in this harsh new world, and a new breed of superpatriot was born.

In DC's *Batman and the Outsiders Annual* #1 (1984), the American Security Agency's Force of July—Major Victory, Lady Liberty, Mayflower, Silent Majority, and Sparkler—toe the line for the government; but once his teammates die in battle, the Major reevaluates his loyalty. In 1986, Dark Horse Comics introduced a conflicted superpatriot, forged in the fires of conspiracy. The American (no relation to the 2000s hero of same name from Com. X), serialized in the anthology *Dark Horse Presents,* was a jingoistic juggernaut, genetically enhanced to protect the United States' foreign and domestic interests against terrorist threats. The public was led to believe that the American was a sole individual, and did not suspect that he was actually an army of interchangeable soldiers, one always ready to replace another who died in action. When the latest American decides to go public to honor his predecessors who perished while fighting terrorists, he is thrust into conflict with a tight-lipped U.S. government. DC's Agent Liberty storms into *Superman* vol. 2 #90 (1991) brandishing firearms, retractable gauntlet blades, and an energy shield. An expertly trained operative for the CIA's covert squad the Sons of Liberty, Agent Liberty questions his employers' motivations after encountering Superman and members of the Justice League of America. Image Comics' superpatriot, appositely named Superpatriot, is a hard-hitting freedom fighter first seen in the pages of Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon* series in 1993.

In 1986, Marvel introduced into *Captain America* a former soldier named John Walker, publicly known as the grandstanding guardian Super-Patriot. With augmented strength and a well-oiled publicity machine backing him, this superpowered yes-man leveraged Steve Rogers out of his job as Captain America. Rogers eventually returned to his guise, and Walker became USAgent, a bounty hunter of supervillains, who is employed by the U.S. Commission on Superhuman Activities. Cap tain America suffered through several subsequent reboots, with varying degrees of success, until being renewed by a real-life catastrophe: the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America, after which the hero was reinvented into a kind of "terrorist smasher." Taking a cue from the American and Agent Liberty, however, the post–September 11 Cap is suspicious of the government he is sworn to defend.

Indeed, in Marvel's *Civil War* (2006–2007) Captain America led the superheroes who opposed the government's Superhuman Registration Act, since he believed it was a violation of the liberty of the individual. Captain America's side lost the war and he was arrested. But Captain America ultimately triumphed. Not only was the Registration Act overturned, but the President himself pardoned Steve Rogers and even placed him in charge of national security. The country could have no better protector. *—ME & PS*

Supervillains

At the advent of comics' Golden Age (1938–1954), readers were dazzled by the audacious exploits and flashy ensembles of the first wave of superheroes. Very quickly, however, the novelty of these men and women of steel became endangered from battles with generic gunmen and mouthy mobsters, menaces borrowed from the pages of newspapers of the day. Comic book editors, writers, and artists were challenged to create super*villains* against whom their heroes could maintain their mythic status.

MEDIA INSPIRATIONS

Some comics creators looked to the movies for inspiration. Mad scientists, a staple of popular cinema of the 1930s, soon unleashed their diabolical machinations against many of the first superheroes. Dr. Death, a run-of-the-mill evil genius, posed a minor threat to Batman, but Professor Hugo Strange proved a deadlier menace: He terrorized the hero's home of Gotham City with mutated monsters and noxious gas. The first two major foes to challenge Superman boasted tremendous intellects: the Ultra-Humanite, who could transfer his mind into other bodies; and Lex Luthor, a mastermind who took on Superman with a destructive arsenal, and became so popular with readers that he has endured to this day. Captain Marvel, the "World's Mightiest Mortal" of Fawcett (and later DC) Comics fame, was habitually harassed by the dastardly Dr. Sivana. Similarly, Professor Torture bedeviled the Angel (no relation to the popular X-Men member), Dr. Psycho confronted Wonder Woman, the Thinker challenged the Flash, Brainwave tried to outsmart the Justice Society of America, Dr. Riddle took on Bulletman and Bulletgirl, and Mr. Who used his "Z solution" to annoy Dr. Fate. Many of these characters apparently patronized the same tailor, given their preference for lab coats.

Movie monsters scared up big box office receipts during this era, and inspired ghoulish supervillains in comic books. In one of his earliest tales, Batman fought—and killed!—vampires, then later met Clayface, a serial killer patterned after horror star Boris Karloff, and Two-Face, a grotesquely scarred Jekyll-Hyde gangster. The undead Solomon Grundy lumbered out of the swamps to become a foe of Green Lantern; Captain America and Bucky battled the "walking dead" called the Hollow Men; and the serpentine saboteur Cobra put the squeeze on Magno, the Magnetic Man.

Another early supervillain trend—costumed criminals—netted mixed results. Bad guys with colorful garb did not always make enduring adversaries: Doll Man's pint-sized pest Tom Thumb, and Bulletman's nemesis the Black Rodent (whose uniform included a rat's-head mask and a tail), are remembered today only by the most dedicated historians. Superman's first enemy to don a disguise, the Archer, also failed to strike a bull-eye with readers. Most of the menacing masqueraders added to Batman's rogues' gallery, however, combined compelling modus operandi with garish attire to imprint themselves upon comics readers: The ghastly, grinning Joker's shock of green hair and pasty-white face frightened fans, as did his penchant for inducing a smile upon murdered victims; the fetching Catwoman's sexy purple gown and flowing ebon locks belied her wicked fluency with her "cat-o'-nine-tails" whip; and the pillaging Penguin's portly waddle made him look comical, but his deadly bumbershoots were no laughing matter.

THE EVIL THAT MEN DO

World War II produced real-life "supervillains" who shocked the world. Despicable acts of bloodshed, torture, and conquest perpetrated by the Axis powers filled the papers and newsreels, proving too sinisterly seductive for the comics to ignore. In the early 1940s, German and Japanese soldiers, spies, and saboteurs were regularly depicted as comic book menaces: Superman tackled Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin in a 1940 *Look* magazine supplement, and Marvel's own Captain America, who premiered in March 1941, owes his very origin to the advent of Nazi spies. Once the December 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor drew the United States into this global conflict, the anti-Axis sentiment became even more overt. Actual comic book supervillains, swathed in Swastika cloth, set their diabolical sights on superheroes: The Red Skull became Captain America's principal adversary; Captain Marvel Jr. squared off against Captain Nazi; MLJ Publications' Steel Sterling battled Baron Gestapo, and its dark hero the Hangman was the sworn enemy of Captain Swastika; and a cretin called Satan, decked out in a robe decorated with a Swastika, fought Harvey Comics' Spirit of 76. Japanese villain Captain Nippon took on Captain Marvel Jr.; the yellow-skinned, fang-toothed Claw, an "Oriental" supremacist who could grow to humongous proportions, fought the Golden Age Daredevil (not to be confused with the Marvel Comics hero of the same name); and the Shield and his sidekick Dusty wrangled with the heinous Hun. Hitler himself appeared regularly in comics and on comics covers of the era, including Gleason Publications' 1941 classic, *Daredevil Battles Hitler* #1.

Golden Age superhero comics did not exclusively rely upon the Axis threat for villainous fodder, however: Each publisher consistently churned out a bevy of bad guys (and gals) to fight their superheroes. Noteworthy no-goodniks of the era include Captain Marvel's (and the Marvel Family's) foe Mr. Mind (a brainy worm wearing thick-lensed eyeglasses), the robotic Mr. Atom, the savage Ibac, and the problematic Monster Society of Evil (a villainous superteam led by Mr. Mind); Green Lantern's enemies the Icicle, the Gambler, the Sportsman, the Huntress, and the Harlequin; the Shark, who swam into the pages of *Amazing-Man Comics;* Dr. Fate's mystical menace Wotan; and the Riddler, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, the Mad Hatter, and the Scarecrow, yet more hazardous threats to Batman and Robin.

Other memorable Golden Age supervillains include the Hangman's foe, the Executioner (who wielded an ice pick as an artificial hand); Flash rogues Star Sapphire, the Fiddler, and Thorn; Magno, the Magnetic Man's pesky Clown; the villainous Valkyrie, who was a thorn in Airboy's side; the armored God of War Mars and the spotted pest the Cheetah, who made life tough for Wonder Woman; the sentient ventriloquist's puppet called the Dummy, arch foe of DC Comics' Western superhero the Vigilante; Hawkman's dastardly dapper nemesis the Gentleman Ghost; Superman's headaches the Puzzler, the Prankster, the Toyman, and Mr. Mxyztplk (later Mr. Myyzptlk); the cloudy criminal called the Mist, who mystified Starman; a different villain calling himself the Mist, who clashed with MLJ's Black Hood, as did Panther Man, the Skull, and the Crow; and a handful of enemies of DC Comics' Justice Society of America—Vandal Savage, Per Degaton, the Psycho-Pirate, and evil assemblage, the Injustice Gang of the World. Most of these supervillains were content to use their powers or weapons to plunder, or just to irritate their enemies, but a few—including Mars, Vandal Savage, and the Claw—were true tyrants, bent on domination.

Once the most popular superheroes jumped from comic books to other media, their rogues usually failed to accompany them. Sivana was nowhere to be seen in the movie serial *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (1941), nor did the Red Skull join his foe in *Captain America* (1944). Likewise, the Man of Steel's enemies from the comics were absent from the seventeen *Superman* animated theatrical shorts produced by the Fleischer Studios (1941–1943), but Luthor appeared on screen in the live-action serial *Atom Man vs. Superman* (1950). In their two movie serials, Batman and Robin tangled with villains specially tailored for the limited budgets of the medium, but in their daily and Sunday newspaper strips, arch-nemeses Joker, Penguin, and Catwoman were menacing mainstays.

POSTWAR VILLAINS

While World War II was a boon for superhero comics, the war's conclusion proved disastrous for the genre, and most superheroes and supervillains were systematically retired. For the handful of superheroes who remained in print, their adversaries continued to reflect the headlines of contemporary newspapers. Readers predisposed toward believing the Roswell alien-landing story appreciated Captain Midnight's 1947 struggles with Jagga the Space Raider and Xog the Evil Lord of Saturn; in 1948 the Fighting Yank clobbered Ku Klux Klan–like robed foes; and the Fighting American, one of the few superheroes (albeit a parody of the medium) to premiere in the 1950s, fought Communist adversaries like Poison Ivan and Hotsky Trotsky.

By the mid-1950s, almost all superheroes had hung up their capes, save DC's Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, who tangled with alien invaders, a handful of watered-down versions of their Golden Age foes, and a few new additions to their rosters of enemies—Angle Man took on Wonder Woman, and a new, morphing Clayface mucked up Batman's life, as did minor-league menaces Doctor Double-X, Calendar Man, and Signalman. When the Man of Steel flew onto the small screen in the live-action syndicated television series *The Adventures of Superman* (1953–1957), he corralled hoodlums and petty thieves, with nary a supervillain in sight.

One major supervillain did surface to plague comic book superheroes in the 1950s: Dr. Frederic Wertham. This well-intentioned, real-life psychiatrist linked juvenile delinquency to comics reading in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), inciting U.S. Senate hearings that inflicted upon the industry a censorship board (the Comics Code Authority, or CCA). The few post-code supervillains that still appeared in print were nonthreatening—and boring.

DC COMICS SUPERVILLAINS OF THE SILVER AGE (1956–1969)

The introduction of the all-new Flash, in DC Comics' *Showcase* #4 (1956), heralded a superhero comeback. The Flash over time garnered one of the most imaginative rogues' galleries in comics, with each felon employing technological gadgets or scientific weapons to take on the Fastest Man Alive: The Mirror Master teleported and created illusions with trick mirrors, Heat Wave melted the pavement under the Flash's feet with his heat ray, Captain Cold put the Flash on ice with his freeze gun, and the Weather Wizard manipulated blizzards and winds with his weather wand. Other Flash foes of the era include Captain Boomerang, the Top, the Trickster, Pied Piper, Abra Kadabra, Professor Zoom (a.k.a. the Reverse-Flash), Dr. Alchemy (a baddie who sometimes appeared in a different guise, as Mr. Element), and the telepathic, super-intelligent simian, Gorilla Grodd.

Green Lantern followed the Flash with his *Showcase* #22 (1959) reinvention, and likewise attracted science-spawned adversaries: Sinestro, Doctor Polaris, the Shark, Sonar, the Black Hand, Hector Hammond, the Tattooed Man, and a new Star Sapphire (who happened to be the hero's girlfriend under her pink mask). DC continued to rework its Golden Age heroes into Silver Age incarnations, and added ultramodern (for the time) menaces to the mix: The Atom fought Chronos and

Plant-Master; the Shadow Thief challenged Hawkman; Ocean Master, Black Manta, and the Fisherman splashed into the pages of *Aquaman;* and the Justice League of America was plagued by Starro the Conqueror, the Queen Bee, Amazo, Felix Faust, Doctor Light, Doctor Destiny, Despero, the Key, the Shaggy Man, and Kanjar Ro. Eclipso, deemed hero and villain in one man, temporarily became the star of the anthology series *House of Secrets.* The Teen Titans tumbled with the tousle-haired Mad Mod, whose Carnaby Street fashions foreshadowed the coming of the movies' Austin Powers; and Chemo, a giant that spewed toxic chemicals, was a recurring threat to the robot heroes the Metal Men.

Science-based menaces were also introduced into the Superman comics, including the android Brainiac, who used his reducing ray to shrink and collect cities from across the universe; Titano the Super-Ape, a King Kong pastiche, who paralyzed Superman with kryptonite vision; Metallo, the man with the robotic body powered by a kryptonite heart; Bizarro, a superpowerful, but dimwitted, duplicate of the Man of Steel; the multi-powered Composite Superman, who nearly eliminated the Man of Steel *and* Batman; and the Parasite, who could siphon Superman's energy. The Legion of Super-Heroes—the team of super-teenagers living one thousand years in the future—also developed an impressively insidious roster of enemies, including Computo, Doctor Regulus, the Fatal Five, the Time Trapper, Mordru the Merciless, Universo, and the Legion's dishonorable *doppelgängers,* the Legion of Super Villains (Cosmic King, Saturn Queen, and Lightning Lord).

While Batman encountered a few science-based opponents—like the chilling Mr. Freeze (called Mr. Zero in his initial 1959 appearance), the dizzying Spellbinder, and the aforementioned Composite Superman—most of his new foes emerging during the Silver Age were more down to earth: The sultry Poison Ivy seduced Batman and Robin into conflict, the hulking Blockbuster's rage could only be quelled by a glimpse of the face of Bruce Wayne (Batman's alter ego), and Batman discovered the existence of a vast international crime network called the League of Assassins. The Caped Crusader's rogues' gallery became television stars in the live-action *Batman* (1966–1968), which featured Hollywood's hottest (and a few has-beens) as villainous guest stars. Some examples: Cesar Romero as the Joker, Burgess Meredith as the Penguin, Frank Gorshin (temporarily replaced by John Astin) as the Riddler, Vincent Price as Egghead, Roddy McDowell as the Bookworm, Milton Berle as Louie the Lilac, and Victor Buono as King Tut. On Saturday morning TV, Brainiac, Luthor, Mr. Mxyzptlk, and the Prankster fought Superman on his cartoon show, while, conversely, most of the other animated episodes featuring DC superheroes pitted them against stereotyped extraterrestrials.

DC's supervillains of the Silver Age shared more in common than flamboyant costumes and scientific weaponry. Most were motivated by greed, and their rivalry with their superheroes was a byproduct of their thievery. Few DC villains of this era could be categorized as inherently evil. Exceptions include Grodd, who held no regard for humans, and Luthor, whose hatred of Superman had intensified to such a boiling point that he was no longer content with matching minds with the Man of Steel; he wanted Superman dead.

MARVEL COMICS SUPERVILLAINS OF THE SILVER AGE

Marvel Comics approached both superheroes and supervillains differently from competitor DC. Marvel's heroes possessed traits previously considered anti-heroic, such as selfishness and narcissism, and its villains went even further, many being despicable despots or egomaniacal enslavers.

The Fantastic Four (FF), the originators of the Marvel universe, protected New York City from an onslaught of menaces, including the hideous subterranean dictator called the Mole Man; the Super Skrull, an alien commanding each of the FF's abilities; and the emotion-manipulating Hate Monger; plus Blastarr, Diablo, Dragon Man, Psycho-Man, the Molecule Man, Puppet Master, and Annihilus. The FF's most challenging adversaries were Galactus, a skyscraper-sized alien who consumed the life force of planets, and Doctor Doom, the collegiate rival of the FF's leader Reed Richards (a.k.a. Mr. Fantastic), whose machinations nearly toppled the Four time and time again. Even the Sub-Mariner, Marvel's popular anti-hero from the Golden Age, resurfaced as a villain in early *Fantastic Four* issues, although his motivation for striking against humankind—retribution for surface dwellers' encroachment upon his undersea kingdom—made him a sympathetic foe.

Some Marvel menaces' names unambiguously conveyed a thirst for domination, or an evocation of terror: the Avengers' antagonists Kang the Conqueror and Ultron; the Incredible Hulk's bitter enemies the Leader, the Abomination, and the Absorbing Man; Captain America's foe Baron Zemo; the armored adversaries of Iron Man, the Titanium Man and the Crimson Dynamo, plus the insidious instigator the Mandarin; the god of thunder Thor's powerful enemies the High Evolutionary, Grey Gargoyle, and Ulik; and Dormammu and Baron Mordo, the sinister sorcerers casting evil spells on the Master of the Mystic Arts, Doctor Strange. The Silver Surfer battled the lord of the underworld, Mephisto, and when not warring against pummeling powerhouses, Thor matched wits with his evil half-brother Loki. Daredevil's rogues' gallery lacked the omnipotence of some of Marvel's other 1960s villains, but still, the Beetle, the Owl, the Stilt-Man, and the Gladiator were no pushovers (actually, pushing over the Stilt-Man *was* one way to defeat him!).

Marvel's X-Men, a society representing humankind's next evolutionary step, waged a civil war with evil mutants like Magneto, the Juggernaut, the Blob, the Toad, and Sauron. Spider-Man, Marvel's oft-misunderstood superhero, was regularly branded a bad guy by the media and police, while being targeted by supervillains like Kraven the Hunter, the Kingpin, the Scorpion, the Shocker, Electro, the Vulture, the Lizard, the Sandman, the Rhino, and Mysterio. Spidey's most problematic Silver Age villains, the sneering Green Goblin, who sailed over the New York cityscape on his goblin glider, and the mechanical-armed madman Doctor Octopus (a.k.a. "Doc Ock"), stood out among this pernicious pack. The Hulk, Marvel's monstrous superhero, was a frequent combatant of most of Marvel's heroes, particularly the Fantastic Four's Thing.

In the mid- to late 1960s, many of Marvel's characters were translated to television cartoons, and their villains joined them, wreaking terror on the tube. These translations were truly literal in the case of TV's *Marvel Super Heroes* (1966–1968) and *Fantastic Four* (1967–1970), with the former's limited-animation episodes being shot directly from the Marvel comics and the latter's scripts closely based on them.

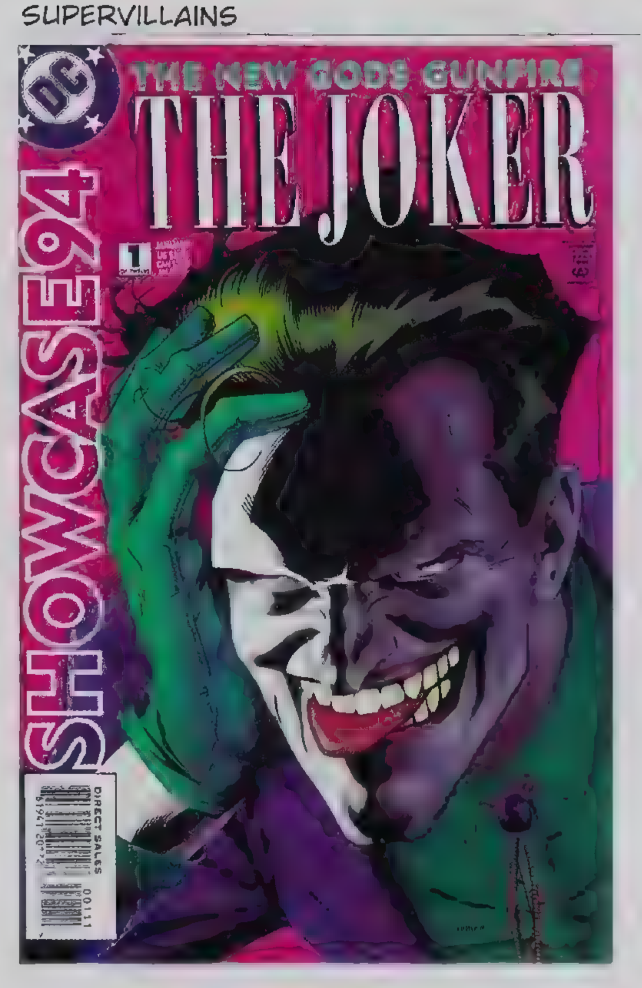
OTHER SILVER AGE SUPERVILLAINS

The popularity of superheroes during the 1960s triggered an upsurge of costumed crime fighters from a variety of comic book publishers and television producers. Moltar, Zorak, the Black Widow, and Brak were among the foes of the Saturday-morning TV superhero Space Ghost, and Captain Action of Ideal Toys (and DC Comics) fame clashed with the otherworldly scientist Dr. Evil. While Charlton Comics' "Action Heroes" were inventive alternatives to DC and Marvel superheroes, their supervillains ranged from unique (the Madmen, who battled the Blue Beetle, plus the Ghost, Punch and Jewelee, and Dr. Spectro, all foes of Captain Atom) to derivative (Peacemaker's flaming foe Mr. Blaze, Judomaster's agile adversary the Acrobat, and Son of Vulcan's egotistical enemy, King Midas).

DARKSEID USHERS IN A NEW BREED OF EVIL

Supervillains became bolder, blacker, and bleaker in the 1970s. So did superheroes. The anti-hero—the hero with personality flaws, or with questionable motivations—was popularized during the decade, in response to a youth culture desensitized over an unpopular war, civil unrest, and dishonest politicians.

In 1970, Jack Kirby, the artist for many of Marvel's most popular characters of the 1960s, jumped ship to DC, producing four interlocking "Fourth World" titles that shared one central villain: Darkseid (pronounced "Dark-side"), a genocidal demigod



Showcase 94 #1 © 1994 DC Comics. (Cover art by Kevin Nowlan.)

who subjugated the dismal planet Apokolips. Darkseid craved the elusive Anti-Life Equation, and with malevolent minions like his brutish offspring Kalibak, the duplicitous Desaad, and the sadistic Granny Goodness, Darkseid brought a new depth to DC villainy. Had Kirby introduced Darkseid into the Marvel universe, the villain's impact may have been weakened by the publisher's other omnipotent warlords. But at DC, Darkseid was truly unique, and sin gularly vile. His machinations ultimately spread beyond Kirby's "Fourth World," and over the decades he has challenged everyone from Superman to the Legion of Super-Heroes.

Another daringly different DC villain that originated in the early 1970s was Batman's adversary, the immortal Ra's al Ghul, an international terrorist spreading global chaos long before anyone in the real world had heard of Osama bin Laden. Also in the 1970s, one of Batman's most enduring enemies, the Joker, reverted from his mischievous Clown Prince of Crime persona to his original murderous ways, leaving grinning corpses in his wake. The Joker became so popular during the decade that he was awarded his own magazine, albeit one in which restrictions imposed by the CCA censorship board made his portrayal more comical than homicidal.

Another chilling Batman foe to debut during the 1970s was Man-Bat, a chemically-mutated scientist who sprouted powerful batwings. The CCA eased its limitations that formerly prohibited the depiction of the undead in comics, and monster-type villains (and some heroes) soon crept forth. Morbius, the Living Vampire and Man-Wolf fought Spider-Man, and Batman tangled with the muck-monster Swamp Thing.

Urban violence intensified in the real world of the 1970s, and comics supervillains reflected that trend. The street smart Hero for Hire, Luke Cage (later called Powerman), got shafted by superpowered enforcers Diamondback, Mace, Lionfang, and Big Ben; hired gun Deadshot took aim at Batman; and by decade's end, Bullseye was hired by the Kingpin to take down Daredevil. The most famous assassin of the decade, Marvel's Punisher, began his career, in 1974, as a Spider-Man villain, then segued into his own solo adventures, as well as two live-action movies (in 1989 and 2004). The bestial Wolverine, added to a revamped version of the X-Men in 1974, so embodied violent anti-heroics that the X-Men's villains grew more savage in response, like the feral Sabretooth (who, for the record, first surfaced in conflict with the martial-arts superhero Iron Fist). Even the most traditional of superheroes, Superman, witnessed a darkening of some of his rogues' gallery during the 1970s: Luthor amped himself in battle armor, the killer cowboy called Terra-Man flew (on a winged horse!) into Metropolis to take down the Man of Steel, and the Atomic Skull and the Sand-Superman made life difficult for the hero.

Comic book villains discovered that there was safety in numbers during the 1970s: Doctor Doom and Sub-Mariner joined forces in *Super-Villain Team Up* (1975–1980), and DC combined Captain Cold, Sinestro, Grodd, and other scalawags in its *Secret Society of Super-Villains* series (1976–1978). On television, more DC villains (Luthor, Grodd, Black Manta, the Scarecrow, and others) united as the Legion of Doom, in the animated *Challenge of the Super Friends* (1978–1979), and the Riddler, Mordru, Dr. Sivana, and several other DC bad guys were brought to life—and lampooned—by comedians in two campy 1979 live-action *Legends of the Super-Heroes* TV specials. However, in the dramatic, primetime adaptations of superheroes airing during the 1970s—ABC's *Wonder Woman,* and CBS's *The Incredible Hulk* and *The Amazing Spider-Man* –none of the heroes' supervillains appeared.

UPPING THE ANTE

Starting in the 1980s and continuing into the 2000s, real-world street gangstas, serial killers, and international terrorists have made the comic book's costumed bank robber of yesterday seem ludicrous by comparison. The fictional world of superheroes has darkened, and supervillains have slipped even further into evil and depravity.

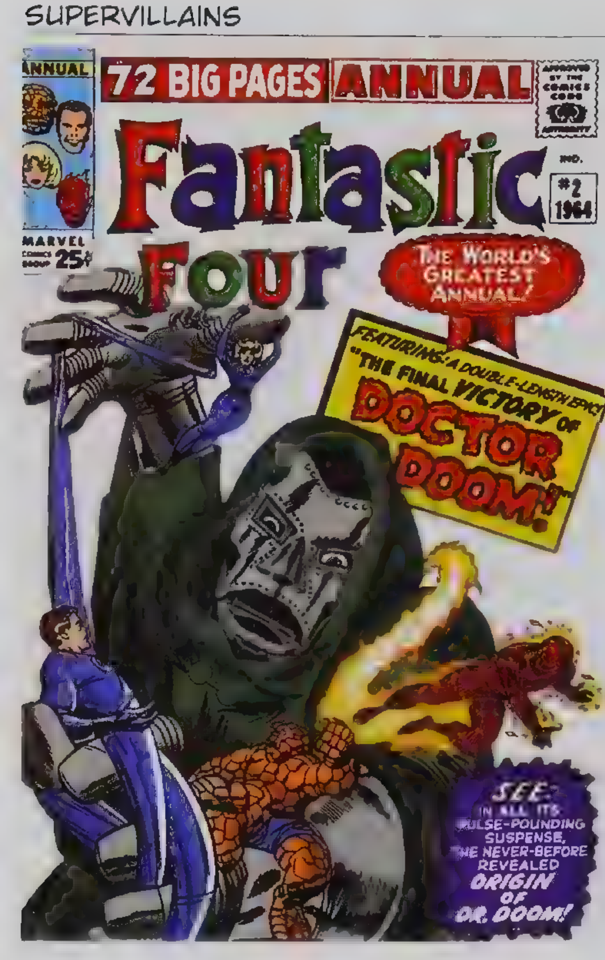
Old-time menaces have become more contemptible—Lex Luthor was reinvented into an egomaniacal corporate executive who executed a power play to the U.S. presidency; the Joker crippled Batgirl and massacred the second Robin the Boy Wonder in 1988, then killed Gotham City police Commissioner Gordon's wife in 1999; and readers were shocked by the intensity of Doctor Doom's hatred of Reed Richards, when Doom disfigured the hero's face in 2003 -and newer villains accomplished previously unthinkable acts: Doomsday beat Superman to death in 1992 (al though he rose from the dead), and Bane broke Batman's back in 1993.

Even the very names of supervillains introduced since the 1980s invoke a more dystopian worldview. Examples include Typhoid Mary and Shotgun, foes of Daredevil; Spider-Man rogues Venom (a talking Venom action figure actually spoke, "I want to eat your brains!"), Carnage, Carrion, and Hobgoblin; X-Men enemies Dark Phoenix (formerly founding team member Marvel Girl), Stryfe, X-Cutioner, Mr. Sinister, Deadpool, and Apocalypse; Fatality, killer of intergalactic Green Lanterns; Brother Blood, who has terrorized the Teen Titans and the Outsiders; Justice League menaces Mageddon (a.k.a. the Primordial Annihilator), Neron, and Soultaker; Spawn's nemesis the Violator; Superman rogues Dominus, Imperiex, Massacre, and Kancer; and Batman villains Killer Croc, Anarky, Brutale, and Cain.

Many of these villains, particularly the rogues' galleries of superstars Spider-Man, Batman, the X-Men, Superman, and the Justice League, have joined their adversaries on television and in the movies. Blockbuster superhero films, however, tend to spice their villains with camp humor—as one of many examples, consider Jim Carrey's over-the-top take on the Riddler in director Joel Schumacher's *Batman Forever* (1995). Willem Dafoe's unsettling interpretation of the Green Goblin in Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* (2002), however, signaled the arrival of sinister supervillains in Hollywood, a dark trend that has continued with Nick Nolte's abusive David Banner in *The Hulk* (2003). Surely the most impressively mad, eerie and deadly supervillain to appear on screen, so far, is the late Heath Ledger's version of the Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008).

Sometimes supervillains do reform. Indeed, Marvel has a long tradition of rehabilitating supervillains, going back to when former costumed criminals Hawkeye, Quicksilver, and the Scarlet Witch joined the Avengers, under Captain America's leadership (as the team nicknamed "Cap's Kooky Quartet") in the mid-1960s. In the modern era, the original Thunderbolts (created by Kurt Busiek and Mark Bagley in 1997), a team of supervillains who first posed as superheroes—and then tried to actually become heroes—comes to mind.

The theme of supervillains fighting for the right underlies the modern version of DC's Suicide Squad, which debuted in *Legends* #3 (January 1987). This is a covert government strike force that is primarily composed of supervillains who agree to go on missions in exchange for a pardon. Members have included such notorious costumed criminals as Captain Boomerang, Captain Cold, Deadshot, and Poison Ivy. The Squad is overseen by government agent Amanda Waller. The Squad has appeared on television in the animated series *Justice League Unlimited* (under the name Task Force X) and in the live-action series *Smallville.* Although Waller has been depicted as


ANNUAL
72 BIG PAGES ANNUAL
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Fantastic Four
NO. #2 1964
MARVEL COMICS GROUP 25¢
THE WORLD'S GREATEST ANNUAL!
FEATURING: A DOUBLE-LENGTH EPIC! "THE FINAL VICTORY OF DOCTOR DOOM!"
SEE: IN ALL ITS PULSE-POUNDING SUSPENSE, THE NEVER-BEFORE REVEALED ORIGIN OF DR. DOOM!

Fantastic Four Annual #2 © 1964 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jack Kirby and Chic Stone.)

heavy-set in the comics and animation, she is a more glamorous figure in live action, as portrayed by Pam Grier on *Smallville,* and Angela Bassett in the *Green Lantern movie* (2011). The new *Suicide Squad* comic, that launched in September 2011, initially included Deadshot, Harley Quinn, and King Shark on its roster. Yet though supervillains may serve in the Suicide Squad, they tend not to reform.

Superheroes, the contemporary counterparts of the ancient gods, traditionally represented the lofty ideals to which humankind aspired. As society slipped more into violence, so did its heroes. Consequently, supervillains have continued their descent into the darkest recesses of the human soul, with little hope for rehabilitation for most of them. But such is villainy. As the editors of Marvel's trade paperback *Bring Back the Bad Guys* (1998) pondered, "What is good without evil?" —*ME & PS*

Teen Titans

They were not the first group of teen sidekicks to join together to fight crime, but they are the most famous. Robin, Kid Flash, Wonder Girl, Speedy, and Aqualad were the original Teen Titans in 1964, and almost forty years—and many codename and costume changes later—they and their legacies live on. Created by writer Bob Haney, at the behest of DC Comics editor George Kashdan, the group first appeared with no name in *The Brave and the Bold* #54 (June–July 1964), wherein Robin, Kid Flash, and Aqualad joined forces to stop the villainous Mr. Twister. Wonder Girl joined as the group gained their name a year later in *The Brave and the Bold* #60 (June–July 1965). Another appearance in *Showcase* that year preceded *Teen Titans* #1 (January–February 1966).

Green Arrow's sidekick Speedy guest-starred in issue #4 (July–August 1966), while *Doom Patrol*'s animalistic shape-changer Beast Boy showed up in #6 (November–December 1966). Other young heroes joined the Titans for various stories as the book continued its bimonthly run, including Russian powerhouse Starfire, mysterious psychic redhead Lilith, squabbling brothers the Hawk and the Dove, water-breather Aquagirl, and African American hero Mal Duncan. Along the way, the teens faced villains ranging from monsters, witches, and interdimensional kidnappers to fashion disaster Mad Mod and the robotic killer called Honey-Bun. For a brief time, the Titans gave up their costumes, in penance for a murder they were framed for; during this time, a philanthropist named Loren Jupiter helped mentor them. Wonder Girl's origin was told in the first "Who Is Donna Troy?" story in issue #23 (September–October 1969), though it would later be revised repeatedly. Embarrassingly "hip lingo" was used in the dialogue, but the gorgeous art—by Nick Cardy and others—and youthful exuberance of the stories really set them apart.

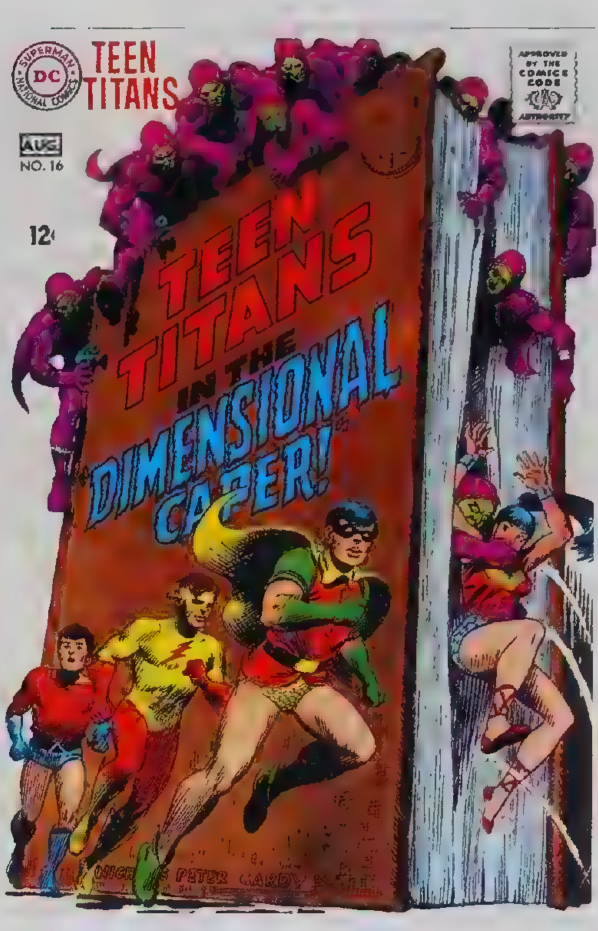
Teen Titans came to an end with issue #43 (January–February 1973), but it was revived in November 1976 with issue #44, a story which introduced Duncan with the codename of the Guardian. The Titans were soon fighting criminals such as Dr. Light, the Fiddler, Two-Face, and many others. New characters joined up, including the original Bat-Girl, Hawkman protégé Golden Eagle, Duncan (now Hornblower), Duncan's sting-blasting girlfriend Bumblebee, Beast Boy, the Hawk and the Dove, Lilith, and a crazed woman called Harlequin who kept claiming to be the daughter of various supervillains. Some members eventually split to form a new group called Titans West, but the final issue of the series loomed. *Teen Titans* #53 (February 1978) revealed the heretofore untold origin of the Titans, as they battled their Justice League mentors who were controlled by Antithesis.

Writer Marv Wolfman and artist George Pérez previewed *The New Teen Titans* in issue #26 of

DC Comics Presents (October 1980), then launched an all-new series the following month. This team consisted of Robin, Kid Flash, Wonder Girl, Changeling (formerly Beast Boy), and an African American man-of-metal named Cyborg, all gathered together by a dark, teleporting empath named Raven, ostensibly, to save alien princess Starfire from alien Gordanians. But Raven *really* brought the team together to fight her father, the ultra-demon Trigon.

The New Teen Titans was an almost instantaneous hit, and was at the top of DC's sales in no time. Wolfman's deft characterization, combined with Pérez's awesomely detailed art, had fans agog, and the plots (eventually by both creators) moved from serious examinations of the plight of runaways to interstellar civil wars, pausing occasionally for "A Day in the Lives" stories. The Titans operated from Titans Tower on an island in the harbor of New York City. They also amassed their own rogues' gallery, including the Brotherhood of Evil, powerful religious cult leader Brother Blood, amoral mercenary Deathstroke the Terminator, Starfire's evil sister Blackfire, assassin Cheshire, and others.

The popularity of the series caught the eye of First Lady Nancy Reagan and other politicians, and three anti drug issues of *New Teen Titans* were created for elementary schools (as was an animated television commercial using the characters). In April 1984, the main series split into two. The retitled *Tales of the Teen Titans* continued its numbering with issue #41, while a second, *The New Teen Titans,* #1 debuted as well, on Baxter paper stock. The idea was that the Baxter issues, sold only in the direct comic market, would be reprinted a year later in the newsstand *Tales* series. This proved a tricky arrangement, but a memorable one for fans, since *Tales* was about to embark on its most infamous storyline ever. In "The Judas Contract" (issues #42–#44 and Annual #3, May–July 1984), teen earth-moving heroine Terra betrays her Titans teammates to Deathstroke and the H.I.V.E., shocking fans everywhere. The story also saw Dick Grayson set aside his Robin costume and codename for the darker gear of Nightwing, and introduced a new Titan, Deathstroke's son Jericho, who could enter and take over anyone's body!


DC
TEEN TITANS
AUG NO. 16
12¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
TEEN TITANS IN THE DIMENSIONAL CAPER!

Teen Titans #16 © 1968 DC Comics. (Cover art by Nick Cardy.)

Both *Titans* series continued for several more years, although the loss of artist Pérez (who moved over to illustrate *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and *Wonder Woman*) was a blow to sales. Still, DC produced *Titans* spin-offs such as *Teen Titans Spotlight,* featuring solo stories of cast members and Titans past. Stories in this run showcased return engagements for Trigon, Brother Blood, and the Fearsome Five, as well as two further origins for Donna Troy/Wonder Girl, leaving her with the new codename of Troia. New Titans would join in the form of crystal-powered Kole, angelic Azrael, and adolescent telekinetic Danny Chase. The team also lost allies; Aquagirl, Kole, and Dove were killed in *Crisis*. With issue #50 of the Baxter series (December 1988), the title changed to *The New Titans* and welcomed Pérez back for a spell of issues, while *Tales* had already ended with issue #91 (July 1988). More members joined—Red Star (the renamed original Russian Starfire), catlike Pantha, a baby Wildebeest, Arsenal (Speedy renamed), and the ghostly telekinetic Phantasm

(Danny Chase disguised).Others were killed—Golden Eagle, Danny Chase, and Jericho were slain in a battle against the Wildebeest Society.

In *The New Titans* #79 (September 1991), a team of young heroes from the future—calling themselves "Team Titans"—appeared, gaining their own series in September 1992. *Team Titans* included flying girl Redwing, another Terra, shapeshifting Mirage, vampiric Dagon, electrical being Kilowatt, computerized Prestor John, and gruff leader Battalion. Their initial purpose was to stop Donna Troy from delivering her baby—who would become the tyrannical Lord Chaos in the future—but once that mission was scrubbed, they stayed in the past until their series ended with issue #24 (September 1994), and all but Terra II and Mirage were wiped from existence. During this time, over in *The New Titans*, Arsenal led a team composed of himself, Darkstar (an again-renamed Troia), Supergirl, Green Lantern (Kyle Rayner), speedster Impulse, explosion-causing Damage, Mirage, and Terra II. This team lasted until issue #130 (February 1996), and then the series was canceled.

In October 1996, a new *Teen Titans* #1 debuted, showcasing another novice team of heroes, all unknown save for team leader, the Atom. They included plasma-energy-throwing Argent, hyper-adrenalized Risk, heat-powered Joto, and light-capturing Prysm, though later members included Captain Marvel Jr. and hulking fighter Fringe. Despite stories that featured these Titans fighting dinosaurs, aliens, and their predecessors, the series was canceled with issue #24 (September 1998). Fans would not have to wait long, however, as a three-issue series called *JLA/Titans* (December 1998–February 1999) brought back every living Titans character, in anticipation of yet another new series.

The Titans #1 premiered in March 1999, featuring Tempest (Aqualad renamed), Starfire, Cyborg (now in a morphing gold body), Flash (Kid Flash renamed), Argent, Nightwing, Troia (back to her old name), Arsenal, speedster Jesse Quick, and Damage. The group operated out of headquarters on the same New York harbor island, though this tower was a hologram and the actual quarters were underground. Familiar villains such as Deathstroke, Blackfire, H.I.V.E., and Cheshire (the mother of Arsenal's daughter) appeared, alongside new villains such as Marilyn Manson look-a-like Goth, and supervillain group Tartarus. Distressingly, Donna Troy received a *fourth* major origin revision. *The Titans* never quite caught sales fire though, and ended with issue #50 (February 2003).

Following the July 2003 *The Titans/Young Justice: Graduation Day* miniseries, that angered fans by callously killing off both Lilith and Donna Troy, a new *Teen Titans* series was launched in September 2003, initially written by Geoff Johns. (Donna returned in a 2005 miniseries appropriately titled *The Return of Donna Troy.*) Starfire, Cyborg, and Beast Boy (the reverted Changeling) became mentors to the former *Young Justice* members, who now fight as the Teen Titans. Members include Kid Flash (the former Impulse), Superboy (the Kon-El version), Robin III (the Tim Drake version), and Wonder Girl (the Cassie Sandsmark version), though Raven and Jericho quickly became a part of the mix as well. These new Titans are headquartered in a new Titans Tower in San Francisco Bay, and their battles against Deathstroke, Brother Blood, and others leave them hurting. The 2003 *Teen Titans* was a sales smash, with four separate printings of the first issue produced.

The Teen Titans appeared in a trio of animated short adventures, as part of Filmation's animated *Superman-Aquaman Hour* (CBS, 1966–1967), but other than the anti-drug commercial, Cyborg's appearance in *The Super Powers Team: Galactic Guardians* (ABC, 1985–1986), and a proposed animated series in the mid-1980s, the popular group did not make any television appearances. But on July 19, 2003, the Cartoon Network debuted a half-hour *Teen Titans* animated series. The high-rated show features Robin, Starfire, Cyborg, Raven, and Beast Boy, as well as familiar heroes and villains such as Aqualad, Thunder & Lightning, Deathstroke, H.I.V.E., and others.

While still airing new shows on Cartoon Network, *Teen Titans* also debuted on WB's Saturday mornings, to further high ratings. Although some older fans chafe a bit at the blatant anime stylings of the show, most fans young and old enjoy *Teen Titans*. In early 2004, even as the second *Teen Titans* animated season was beginning, a third and fourth season were announced, and multiple toy lines and licensed items began to appear in the summer of that same year. DC caught on to the show's popularity, quickly launching *Teen Titans Go!*, a kids comic series based on the animated version, in November 2003.

In part due to its popular appeal, a comics series, *Titans*, written by Judd Winick, began in 2008, and included in its initial roster Nightwing, Donna Troy, the Flash (Wally West, formerly Kid Flash), Beast Boy, Cyborg, Red Arrow (formerly Speedy), and Starfire. Yet another new *Teen Titans* series launched in September 2011, written by Scott Lobdell and drawn by Brett Booth, with former Robin Tim Drake, now known as Red Robin, as a member of the team.

The Teen Titans' antagonist Slade Wilson, alias Deathstroke, first starred in his own series, *Deathstroke the Terminator*, starting in 1991. He too received a new series, *Deathstroke*, that began in September 2011, written by Kyle Higgins, with art by Joe Bennett and Art Thibert.
—AM & PS

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

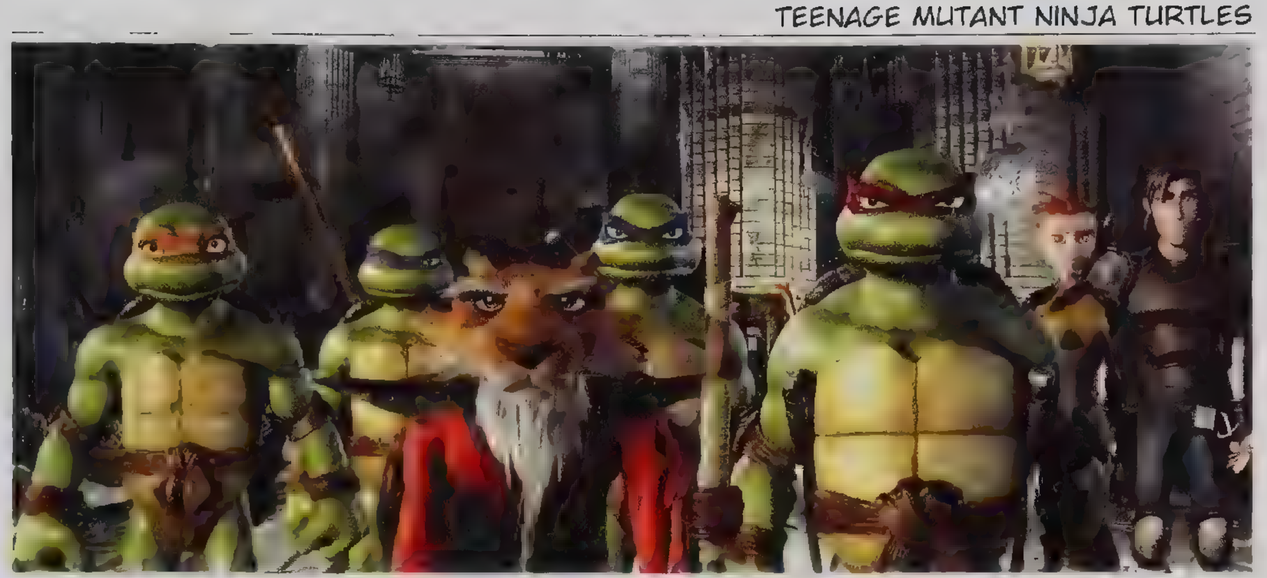
Four turtles fall into the sewers of New York City and are befriended by Hamato Yoshi, a Japanese man who lives in this subterranean refuge. One day Yoshi encounters a strange green glow of sewer sludge, which transforms him into a giant mutant rat named Splinter and the four turtles into humanoid creatures. Master Splinter dedicates his time to teaching the skills of the ninja to the turtles, who have become superpowerful from the radioactive waste floating in the sludge, and thus the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNT) are born.

These "Heroes in a Halfshell," as they have fondly been called, were created by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, who started their self-published black-and-white comic book, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, on a shoestring budget in 1984. In an off-the-wall creative session, the duo came up with the concept of a group of four turtles with a ninjitsu mentor, or *sensei*, whose origin story loosely parodies various elements of Marvel Comics' Daredevil. Eastman and Laird experimented with different looks for each Turtle, but finally agreed on a singular, unified costume for all. Each Ninja Turtle was named after a renowned Renaissance artist: Raphael, Donatello, Michelangelo, and Leonardo.

"When we created the Turtles, we wanted to spoof the world of superhero characters and poke good-natured fun at the heroic but not-so-funny characters that dominated the business," said Laird on the official TMNT website. "The Turtles are fun heroes with an attitude. Basically, they act and think like average teenagers." Indeed, these wisecracking, fun-loving youngsters live life as "normal" adolescents would, stepping out to battle various miscreants, in between binges on pizza and ice cream. Raphael provides the comic relief, delivering one-liners in the midst of heated battle; Donatello is resourceful and wise; Michelangelo (originally spelled "Michaelangelo") is a fun-loving, perpetual kid; and the group's de-facto leader, Leonardo, displays the heroic feats and moments of wisdom that any great leader possesses.

Though the comic's first print run was a humble 3,000 copies, within a few months, new issues were regularly being printed in quantities of 50,000 or more. Eastman and Laird's company was christened Mirage Studios, and the two set about publicizing their mutant terrapins. In a stroke of good timing, a reporter from UPI wrote a story about the Turtles that was picked up on the national wire and ran in dozens of newspapers across the country. The rest, as the say, is history. What started out as a creative fluke was parlayed into a $4.5 billion worldwide phenomenon.

Palladium Books produced a pen-and-paper role-playing game featuring the Turtles, Dark Horse Miniatures produced sets of TMNT lead figures for the role-playing gamers, and First Comics produced full-color reprint volumes of the original series. In December 1987, CBS



A computer-animated television series version of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* debuted in 2012. (WB/Weinstein/Imagi/Mirage / The Kobal Collection.)

aired the animated *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,* which ran twelve seasons until 1996. This highly rated television series saw the Turtles facing off against Splinter's arch enemy, Shredder, a mysterious ninja clan called "the Foot," and Krang, an alien from Dimension X—all the while aiding confidante April O'Neil, a reporter for Channel 6 News.

The success of the show—and the exposure it gave the Turtles—triggered a Playmates toy line, an Archie Comics licensed comic book (which hit the stands in 1988), a daily newspaper strip (launched in 1990), and a big-screen live-action debut, with animatronic characters from Jim Henson. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Movie* debuted in theaters in 1990, followed by *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: The Secret of the Ooze* (1991), and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3* (1993). In the midst of this licensing bonanza, merchandise galore appeared on retailers' shelves, including Turtles T-shirts, Halloween costumes, lunchboxes, stationery, calendars, and coffee mugs. Turtles colloquialisms like "Cowabunga" became the slogan of choice among all playground-dwelling youngsters.

In September 1997, *Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation,* a live-action spin-off of *TMNT,* aired on Fox Kids, but lasted only one season. Though critics commented that the Turtles were mainly a merchandising phenomenon of the early 1990s, in the 2000s the band of ninja mutants made a comeback. In February 2003, the Turtles returned to television in an all-new animated series, as part of Fox's Saturday-morning lineup, supported by a Playmates action-figure line and assorted merchandise. The series moved to the CW network and continued until 2009.

The fourth *Turtles* movie, known simply as *TMNT,* came out in 2007, and was the top money-making movie in its opening weekend in the United States. Unlike the previous live action Turtles films, this one is computer-animated. Voices were provided by Sarah Michelle Gellar (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) as April O'Neil, Chris Evans (*Captain America: The First Avenger*) as the Turtles' ally Casey Jones, Mako as Master Splinter, Patrick Stewart (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*), and Laurence Fishburne as the narrator.

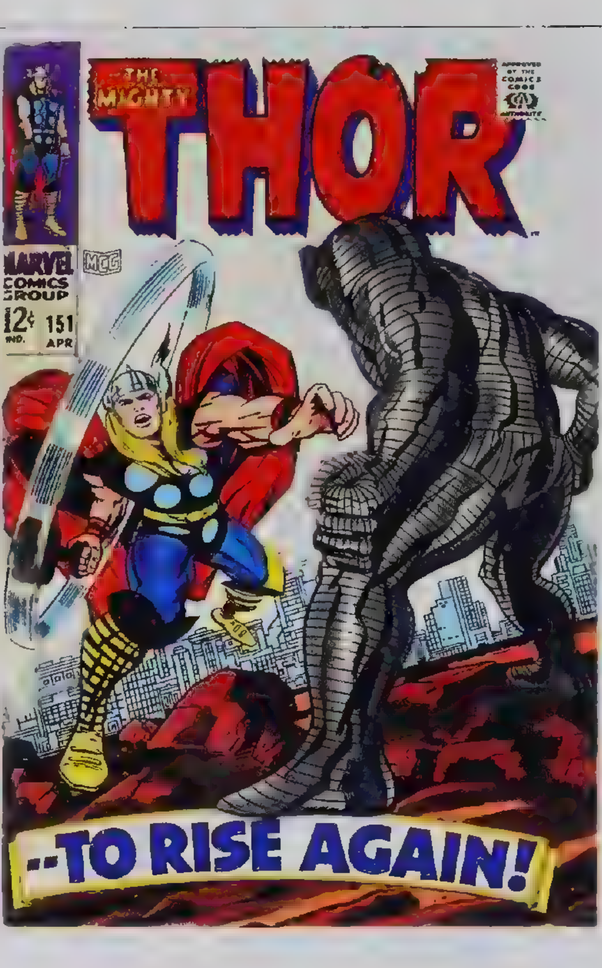
Turtles co-creator Peter Laird bought Kevin Eastman's share of the Turtles property in 2008, and then sold the Turtles franchise to Nickelodeon in 2009. However, Laird retained the rights to do black-and-white *Turtles* comics. Nickelodeon began developing a new computer-animated *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* series for 2012. IDW Publishing licensed the comics rights to the Mirage *Turtles* in 2011, and launched a new *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comics series in 2011, bringing them back to the medium in which they first hatched. —*GM*

Thor

Just as DC Comics has the all-powerful Superman, Marvel has the Mighty Thor, literally a god with extraordinary powers, and like his Kryptonian counterpart, with an earthly alter ego. Integrating themes from the warrior heroes of Norse mythology, Marvel introduced Thor as its fourth superhero. He appeared in late 1962, in the same month as Spider-Man's debut, and he has been one of the company's most enduring stars ever since.

His first adventure was chronicled in *Journey into Mystery* #83, which introduced readers to the frail, lame Doctor Don Blake, vacationing in Norway. Stumbling across an alien invasion force of the Stone Men of Saturn (who bear an uncanny resemblance to the statues on Easter Island), the startled doctor takes refuge in a nearby cave. There, hidden in a deep chamber within, he finds a cane, which he strikes against the wall, only to find himself transformed into a blond, long-haired Adonis, wearing a Viking costume (of sorts) and wielding a magic hammer, called Mjolnir. Blake becomes the Thunder God, Thor, because, as an inscription on the hammer declares, "Whosoever holds this hammer, if he be worthy, shall possess the power of ... Thor." As Thor, Blake can fly (with the help of his hammer) and control the elements, and he possesses extraordinary strength. The hammer also returns, like a boomerang, after being thrown; when the handle is hit twice on the ground it allows Thor to bring on a storm of any type or magnitude; and it makes for one mean weapon in a superhero battle. However, if the hammer is out of Thor's grasp for more than one minute, he reverts to his civilian identity as Blake. Having summarily dispatched the Stone Men back to Saturn, Blake/Thor heads home and on to a long career as a superhero.

Thor was created by Marvel editor/writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby, but neither was consistently able to fit the feature into their schedules for its first few years, so Lee's brother Larry Lieber scripted much of the early material. After several issues, Kirby moved on to the new *X-Men* and *Avengers* titles, but not before contributing to the strip's nascent supporting cast. Having returned to New York, Dr. Blake set up a practice with a pretty young nurse called Jane Foster—think Lois Lane and Clark Kent—with whom he promptly fell in love. In true comic book style, revealing to her that he was really a superhero was strictly forbidden by Thor's father Odin, ruler of the Norse gods in far-off Asgard. Issue #85 introduced Thor's villainous half-brother Loki, the God of Mischief, who was to be a perpetual thorn in the hero's side and the feature's arch-villain, always plotting to take over Asgard.



Thor #151 © 1968 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jack Kirby and Vince Colletta.)

For its first couple of years, the strip was much like any other comic, with regular forays down to Earth by the treacherous Loki, interspersed with occasional communist plotters and local hoods, such as the Grey Gargoyle, Radioactive Man, the Cobra, and Mister Hyde. Thor became a founding member of Lee and Kirby's superhero team the Avengers in 1963. Gradually, however, the series began to evolve as Lee and Kirby returned (with issue #97 in late 1963) and changed the strip's focus from earthbound crimefighting to the more expansive, imaginative realm of fabled Asgard. The pair introduced a new backup series, "Tales of Asgard," which adapted Norse legends and integrated them with the lead strips' growing band of Asgardians. Among the most important new characters were the dashing Balder, a brave, sword-wielding fighter; and Volstagg, Fandral, and Hogun, collectively known as the Warriors Three. Then there was Heimdall, guardian of the Rainbow Bridge to Asgard, and the beautiful and plucky Sif—a future love interest.

The Norse legends had fascinated Kirby since childhood, and coupled with his almost boundless imagination, they inspired some of his greatest art: astonishing battle scenes (often featuring the massed armies of Asgard), vast cosmic vistas, and extraordinary creatures. With issue #126 (in early 1966), *Journey into Mystery* was retitled *Thor,* and the comic entered its most creative period with a stream of new stars and villains. A lengthy narrative introduced the Greek god Hercules (later to join the Avengers and to star in his own Marvel comics series), his father Zeus, and the ruler of the Netherworld, Pluto. This was followed by an excursion into a far-off galaxy with the Colonizers of Rigel, and Ego the Living Planet. Later stories featured the High Evolutionary (a sort of Dr. Moreau for the space age); the grotesque Ulik and the Rock Trolls; Hella the Goddess of Death; and the two great beasts, Surtur and Mangog, bent on bringing about Ragnarok—the destruction of Asgard and all around it. Amidst all the rest, of course, there were regular plots and schemes by Loki.

This was heady stuff, and Kirby's narratives (it is widely accepted that he was the guiding force in the project) were complemented by Lee's flowery, almost Shakespearean language—all "thees," "thous," and "forsooths." In issue #124, Jane Foster discovered that Thor and Don Blake were one and the same, and unable to cope with the enormity of it all she was gone within the year, to be replaced by the rather more heroic Sif.

Lee and Kirby eventually revised Thor's origin. In *Journey into Mystery* #83 it had appeared that Don Blake was an ordinary mortal who had been transformed into Thor. But, clearly, Lee and Kirby's Thor was the actual Norse god and had lived for untold centuries. Lee and Kirby explained that, years ago, Odin had punished Thor for defying his will by transforming him into the mortal Blake, in order to teach him humility. Hence, when Blake found the cane, he transformed back into his true self, the mighty Thor. The creators used the Blake identity less and less and, by 1970, it had largely been abandoned. That year was a watershed for the feature, as it witnessed Kirby's departure for arch-rival DC Comics, where he would create the New Gods, very much in the same imaginative tradition as Thor.

Within a year, Lee, too, had gone, but his replacements Gerry Conway and Len Wein, with artist John Buscema, carried on in much the same tradition as Kirby and Lee. Indeed, it is a hallmark of the strip that for the next three decades—the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s—it rarely strayed too far from the Lee/Kirby blueprint. Trends from "relevance" to hard-boiled action to the darker 1990s came and went, but Thor was invariably toughing it out with Loki in Asgard, traveling through space, or preventing Ragnarok—again. Buscema was the principal artist throughout much of the 1970s, combining his peerless draftsmanship with a strong sense of action. In lesser hands, however, the strip has struggled.

Following one such thin period, fan favorite Walter Simonson took over the comic as writer and penciler in 1983 (with issue #337), and revisited the original premise that a worthy bearer of the hammer shall possess the power of Thor, by giving it to a bizarre-looking alien called Beta Ray Bill. Over the next four years, Simonson—a Kirby devotee—recaptured the grandeur of his idol's vision, reviving some of the old favorites, and even turning the original Thor into a frog! Thor soon got his hammer (and body) back, but while Simonson was on the comic almost anything he did was received with rapture by its readers. In the late 1980s Simonson left *Thor,* and the former *Amazing Spider-Man* creative team of Tom DeFalco and Ron Frenz took his place.

In the early 1990s (in issue #433), DeFalco and Frenz combined Thor's essence with a new human host, the architect Eric Masterson, to create effectively a new Thor, who had to learn to be

Chris Hemsworth is Thor in the 2011 movie, with Anthony Hopkins as his father, Odin. (Marvel/Paramount / The Kobal Collection.)

a superhero all over again. In time, the old Thor reappeared and the Masterson incarnation (complete with beard and ponytail), now known as Thunderstrike, spun off into his own, short-lived series (1993–1995). Thunderstrike also teamed up with Beta Ray Bill and a Thor of the future called Dargo, in the wonderfully named (if ephemeral) *Thor Corps*. After issue #502, as part of a company-wide, late 1990s restructuring plan known as *Heroes Return*, the *Thor* comic restarted its numbering at issue #1, and readers were introduced to yet another new Thor.

In the wake of *Heroes Return*, a stricken Thor was given a new mortal incarnation—Jake Olsen, an emergency paramedic—but new writer Dan Jurgens did not stop there. After a period of finding his feet, the new Thor was split apart from his human host by Odin, who feared that his son had become too attached to planet Earth. Odin then died and his almost limitless power was transferred to his son, who became (as a new cover legend proclaimed) Thor, Lord of Asgard. As Thor climbed the ladder of godhood, Asgard was transported to Earth and, in a daring move on Jurgens' part, the strip saw the emergence of a new religion: Thorism. As lowly earthlings attempted to cope with the gods who now walked among them, effectively creating world peace in their wake, it was left to Olsen to question the wisdom of Thor's actions. Thor's reign on Earth devolved into tyranny, and suffering from guilt, Thor succeeded in diverging a timeline in which Asgard had never been transported to Earth.

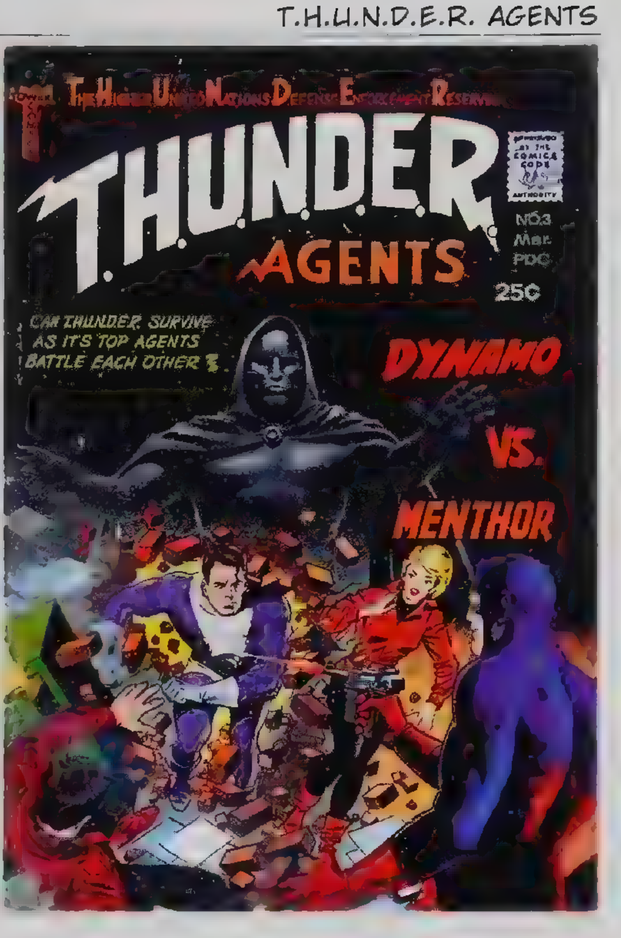
Thereafter, Ragnarok, the "Twilight of the Gods," took place, destroying Asgard and seemingly wiping out the Asgardians. When Thor entered into a limbo-like void, his alternate Don Blake identity reappeared on Earth. Finding Mjolnir, Blake used it to enter the void and reunite with Thor. (Thor can once more now turn into Blake.) In this new storyline, initially written by J. Michael Straczynski, Thor returned to Earth and used the Odinpower to recreate Asgard as a city floating over the town of Broxton, Oklahoma. The Asgardians had been transformed into mortals, but Thor restored them to their true godly forms.

(Thor now no longer possesses the limitless power of Odin.) Norman Osborn (the evil Green Goblin), who had risen to power in the U. S. government, launched an attack on the new Asgard and destroyed it. Thor and his Avengers allies defeated Osborn and his forces. Odin has recently returned to life and led the Asgardians back to their home dimension. Marvel launched a new *The Mighty Thor* comics series, written by Matt Fraction and drawn by Olivier Coipel, in 2011.

Thor first appeared in animation in the 1966 *Marvel Super Heroes* TV series, based directly on the stories and artwork in Lee and Kirby's comics. But Marvel's Thunder God finally made it to the big screen with the premiere of the highly successful *Thor* movie in May 2011. Produced by Marvel Studios and released by Paramount, the film was directed by Kenneth Branagh, who is best known for acting and directing in cinematic adaptations of the plays of William Shakespeare. The cast included Chris Hemsworth as Thor, Natalie Portman as Jane Foster, Anthony Hopkins as Odin, and Tom Hiddleston as Loki. Appearing in cameo roles were Stan Lee (as usual in Marvel movies), J. Michael Straczynski, who worked on the film's story, and Walter Simonson, celebrating at a banquet in Asgard. Hemsworth and Hiddleston return as Thor and Loki in *The Avengers* movie (2012). —*DAR & PS*

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents

Of the many second-division publishers that sprang up in the 1960s, inspired by the sudden success of Marvel Comics, Tower (with its principal title *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*) is among the most fondly remembered. The precise origins of Tower Comics are still somewhat vague, but the company seems to have sprung from the Midwood and Belmont line of paperbacks, owned by Harry Shorten and Archie Comics co-owner Louis Silberkleit. Teaming up as Midwood-Tower, they created Tower Comics and recruited the great artist Wally Wood, fresh from a popular stint on Marvel's *Daredevil,* to put together a comics line for them. Thrilled at the prospect of control over his own work, Wood gathered together his friends and studio members, and created the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents.


The Higher United Nations Defense Enforcement Reserves
T.H.U.N.D.E.R.
AGENTS
No.3
Mar.
25¢
CAN THUNDER SURVIVE AS IT'S TOP AGENTS BATTLE EACH OTHER?
DYNAMO
VS.
MENTHOR

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents #3 1966. © & ™ John Carbonaro. (Cover art by Wally Wood.)

The first issue of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* came out in late 1965 and, unusually, had twice the page count of other comics at that time, sixty-eight pages, but at twenty-five cents it was also twice the price as well. The comic starred the supersecret heroes Dynamo, NoMan, Menthor, Raven, and Lightning. All of them worked for the clandestine T.H.U.N.D.E.R. organization—The Higher United Nations Defense Enforcement Reserves—in a battle against any evil foe who might threaten the earth.

The characters' origin story reveals how T.H.U.N.D.E.R. operatives arrive too late to save the brilliant Professor Jennings from agents of the dreaded Warlord, but find three fantastic new inventions in his apartment. One of these is given to each of three brave T.H.U.N.D.E.R.

Agents. Len Brown (a.k.a. Dynamo) is given an "electron molecular magnifier belt," which gives him Superman-like strength and a body as hard as steel. Dr. Dunn, an aged colleague of Jennings who devised a way of transferring his mind into the body of an android (one of many which he had built), is given a cloak of invisibility to become NoMan. John Janus (a.k.a. Menthor) is given a cybernetic helmet that amplifies his brain power to such an extent that he can read minds and master telekinesis. (This character was originally a double agent, working for the Warlord, but he soon saw the error of his ways.) The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad (Guy Gilbert, Weed, Kitten, and Dynamite) were regular agents who popped up in various stories to help their superpowered colleagues defeat a variety of aliens, zombies, and dictators.

In what was clearly a combination of Marvel-style superheroics and *Man from Uncle*/James Bond–style spy thrillers, the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents regularly came up against sinister secret societies, such as the Warlords, Overlord and his Subterraneans, the Red Star Group, and SPIDER. Other dastardly (though perhaps rather routine) villains included Dynavac, Vibraman, the Tarantula, Dr. Sparta, and Demo and the Submen. Two of the publisher's most memorable villains had an unusual depth to them—Iron Maiden and Andor. The armor clad, beautiful, yet deadly, Iron Maiden was Dynamo's top enemy but was also in love with him and would go to some lengths not to kill him. Andor had been experimented on by the Subterraneans since childhood, to make him a deadly opponent for the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, but he was a tormented soul who soon turned against his masters.

Each issue of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* was a treat for the eyes. Wood was at the peak of his powers on the series and was prominently featured in each issue, while such artistic talents as Reed Crandall, Gil Kane, Mike Sekowsky, and Steve Ditko also contributed notable work. Scripts were provided by Wood himself, Steve Skeates, Bill Pearson, Larry Ivie, and Len Brown. The latter's name had been appropriated (much to the writer's surprise) by Wood as Dynamo's alter ego.

Tower's ambition to compete with Marvel and DC was great, but it was also the company's undoing. In 1966, it released a second superhero title, *Undersea Agent,* and later spun-off Dynamo and NoMan into their own short-lived series. In addition, it launched a war comic—*Fight the Enemy*—and a couple of titles starring Tippy Teen (in an attempt to tap into the Archie Comics market). All of the comics were double-sized and cost twenty-five cents each, and ultimately they overstretched the publisher's talents and readership. At double the price of other comics on the stands, readers were put off. In any case, as beautiful as the comics were, they lacked Marvel's personality and excitement. Tower had its innovative ideas (killing off Menthor in issue #7, for instance) but the company was occasionally too eager to copy more successful superheroes. For example, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents Lightning and the Raven were transparently based on the Flash and Hawkman. So most of these new titles were dead by 1967, while *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* staggered on, with an increasingly erratic schedule, until issue #20 in 1969. *Tippy Teen,* on the other hand, proved to be the publisher's most successful comic, running for twenty-seven issues until 1970.

Despite its relatively short life span, there have been numerous official and unofficial *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* revivals. Throughout the 1980s, rival comic book companies published competing T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents comics, with certain publishers believing that they had bought the rights to the heroes, while others claimed they were in the public domain. According to the July 2001 issue of *Comic Book Artist* magazine, eight different titles (from five companies) either presented new strips or reprinted original *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* comics, before the copyright situation was remedied. Interestingly, in the United Kingdom much of the Tower line was reprinted in black-and-white titles, such as *Creepy Worlds* and *Uncanny Tales* by the Alan Class Company, and was continuously reprinted from the 1960s up to the mid-1980s, making these titles as familiar to British readers as many Marvel or DC comics. The 1990s even saw a bootleg British *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* comic clearly photocopied from American issues.

By the mid-1990s, the legal complexities had been ironed out and a regular *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* series was announced by—of all companies—*Penthouse* magazine. However, while many issues had been completed, only one story appeared, in the pages of *Omni Comix* #3, before Penthouse canceled its nascent comic line. Fans could have been forgiven for thinking that the characters were forever doomed, but in 2009, DC Comics announced that it would integrate the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents into the DC universe, and the company finally launched a new *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* comics series in 2011. —*DAR*

Ultraverse Heroes

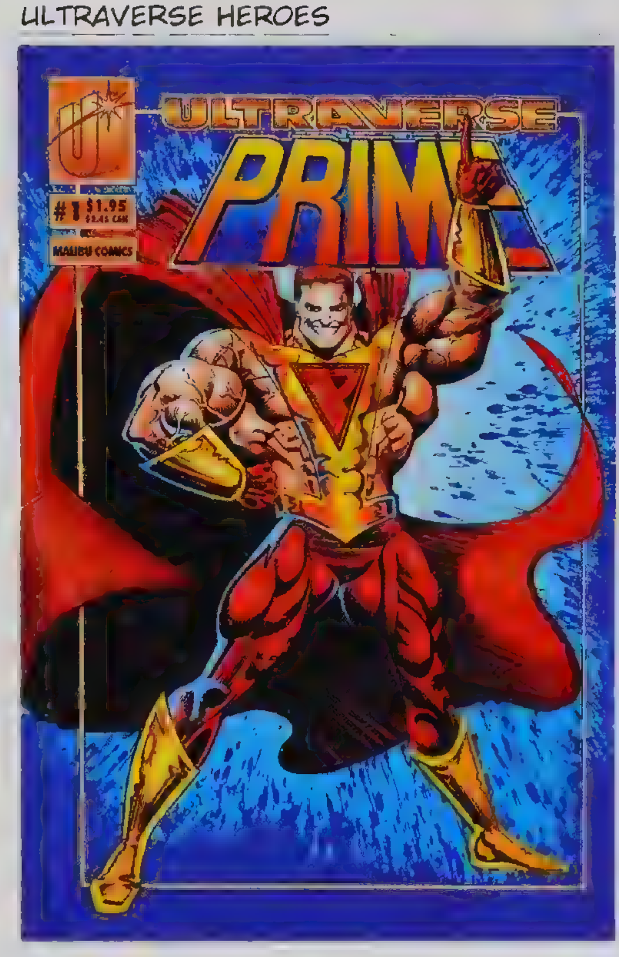
New superhero universes come and go, but few have had the flash-bulb success of the Ultraverse, a line of titles from Malibu Comics. Its diverse pantheon of heroes, including Prime, Mantra, the Strangers, the Night Man, and UltraForce, would not only garner press attention, but also spawn a line of toys, a cartoon, and a live-action television series, and set up a buy-out from one of the world's most successful comic book publishers.

Malibu Comics was founded by Scott Rosenberg in 1986, but the company didn't hit it big until 1992. That's when a distribution deal with the just-beginning Image Comics brought Malibu a huge financial windfall, enabling it to start work on a shared superhero universe to be called the Ultraverse. Unlike Image's art-based comics that sometimes lacked strong storylines, the Ultraverse was built by a group of writers—Mike W. Barr, Steve Englehart, Steve Gerber, James D. Hudnall, Gerard Jones, James Robinson, Len Strazewski, and famed science fiction writer Larry Niven—who worked out how all their concepts and "Ultra" characters would fit together as a seamless whole. The line debuted in June 1993 with *Prime, Hardcase,* and *The Strangers*. Malibu put posters in city bus stops, and advertised on television, both marketing elements which had never been done in the comics world.

Biggest amongst the Ultraverse heroes (in terms of both size and sales) is Prime. Costumed in red and gold, and with hugely muscled arms, Prime is reminiscent of Captain Marvel. The superstrong adult hero is really teenager Kevin Green, whose Ultra-body often becomes unstable and melts into protoplasmic glop. Prime eventually gains a sidekick known as Turbo Charge, an African American gay teen, and battles villains such as Primevil, Doctor Vincent Gross, Maxi-Man, and the Aladdin organization. *Prime* was translated for video games, and optioned as a feature film by Universal, with scripts having been written by Doug Chamberlin, Chris Webb, Don Calame, and Chris Conroy.

Hardcase is an actor who gained Ultra-powers. Fighting crime for a while with three other Ultras in a group known as the Squad, Hardcase decides to retire when the other Squad members are killed or made comatose by the robotic NM-E. He plays a hero in the movies, but eventually Hardcase decides to become a hero again in real life. Villains he faces include Rex Mundi, Dirt Devil, and Hardwire.

The Strangers are a group of heroes whose origin is an accident that affects each of them. When a San Francisco cable car is struck by a blast from outer space (known as "the Jumpstart effect"), the people on it gain Ultra-powers. Seven of them join together as the Strangers, including target-hitting heroine Lady



Prime #1 © 1993 Malibu Comics. (Cover art by Norm Breyfogle.)

Killer, African American teen speedster Zip-Zap, transforming hero Atom Bomb, shrapnel-shooting hero Grenade, alien woman Yrial, electrical-powered heroine Electrocute, and light-powered gay hero Spectral. One of the others affected by the cable car accident is Johnny Domino, who would develop the ability to "hear" evil thoughts from others, and soon gained his own series, *The Night Man.*

Other heroes soon followed with their own books. *Mantra* featured the adventures of a male sorcerer reincarnated into the body of a modern single mother. *Freex* followed the adventures of a group of underground teenage Ultras who felt disenfranchised from humanity. *Prototype* saw a young video game player taking over the super-armor of a corporate Ultra hero. *Firearm* showcased a tough guy with an uncanny shooting ability; in addition to his own comic, he was featured in a Malibu-produced, thirty-minute, live-action video adventure.

At its height, the Ultraverse published fifteen monthly titles, including *Exiles, Firearm, Sludge, Solitaire, The Solution, Warstrike,* and *Wrath.* An ageless, evil vampire named Rune was also given his own series, written and drawn by comics legend Barry Windsor-Smith.

In November 1994, Marvel Comics purchased Malibu and all of its assets, including characters from the Ultraverse, as well as other properties such as *Men in Black,* and a top-level computer-coloring department. For a brief period, it seemed as if Marvel would keep the Ultraverse a popular property, but the company quickly stumbled. Prices rose dramatically higher, and the comics were taken away from newsstand distribution and placed solely in the direct market of comics specialty shops. Editorial interference with the writers and art teams also led to wavering quality. Although Marvel crossed its own characters over into the Ultraverse—titles included *Rune/Silver Surfer* (April 1995), *Night Man vs. Wolverine* (August 1995), and *Avengers/UltraForce* (October 1995)—the line began to hemorrhage both sales and fans.

One of Malibu/Marvel's most popular titles was *UltraForce,* a series drawn by fan favorite George Pérez. *UltraForce* teamed up many popular Ultras, including Prime, Hardcase, and Prototype, with newer heroes Topaz, Ghoul, and Contrary. In October 1995, DIC produced thirteen episodes of a syndicated *UltraForce* animated series, with strong ratings. A Galoob *UltraForce* toy line also premiered. Once the Malibu/Marvel merger was complete, however, even deals that were in place prior to it were in danger. Both the series and toys were killed due to internal politics.

As the Marvel Ultraverse titles continued, the quality slipped further. The creators and original writers were replaced. Characters were also replaced—Mantra changed from a mother to a valley girl—and fans rebelled. In 1996, Marvel made a number of drastic cuts, including canceling a number of books. *Prime, Rune,* and *UltraForce* were among the final hold-outs in publication, but each of them died by December 1996. The final Ultraverse publication was *Ultraverse: Future Shock* (February 1997), a one-shot that attempted to wrap the universe up.

As of early 2004, the last appearance of any Ultraverse hero was *NightMan*, a live-action syndicated television series from Tribune, that aired forty-four episodes from fall 1997 through 1999 (it is still in syndication in some markets). The Ultraverse is remembered by fans today as an entertaining experiment that could have been big ... and almost was. —*AM*

V for Vendetta

V *for Vendetta,* created by writer Alan Moore and artist David Lloyd, is the saga of V, a mysterious costumed vigilante with superhuman physical prowess, who conducts a one-man war against a totalitarian government that rules the United Kingdom.

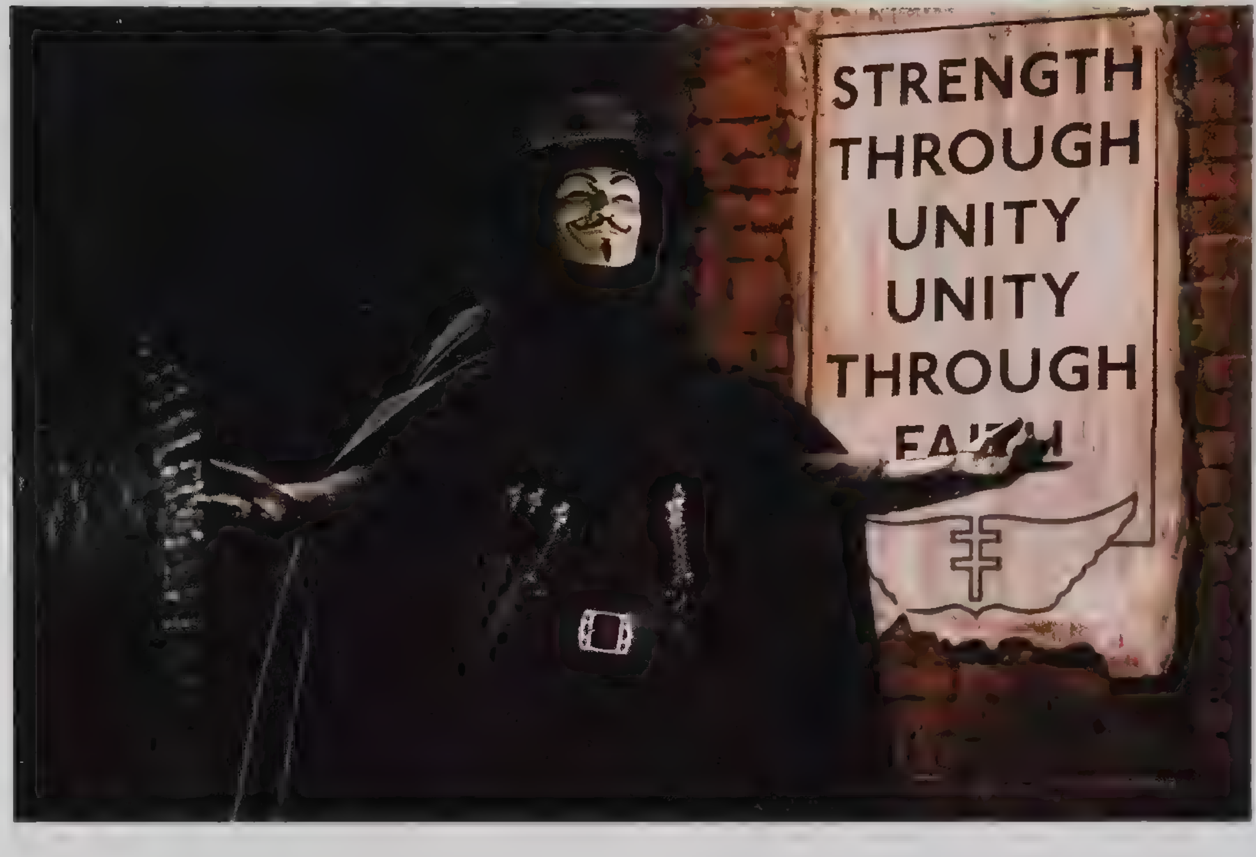
In *V for Vendetta*'s alternate history, there was a nuclear world war in the 1980s; Britain survived, but a fascist political party took control of the government, imprisoning dissidents and other alleged undesirables in concentration camps. Moore and Lloyd never reveal V's true name or face. However, the story establishes that V was a prisoner in one of the British fascist regime's concentration camps, where he was subjected to experiments that greatly enhanced his strength, endurance, and reflexes. He apparently took his alias from the Roman numeral "V" on the door of his room in which he was imprisoned. Each of the chapter titles of *V for Vendetta* prominently features a word starting with "V."

V masquerades as one of the most famous rebels in British history, Guy Fawkes (1570–1606), complete with an eerily smiling face mask. Fawkes is the best known member of the "Gunpowder Plot," a 1605 conspiracy by a group of English Catholics to assassinate King James I, blow up the House of Lords, and make James's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, the new Catholic queen of England. Fawkes was discovered with gunpowder beneath the House of Lords shortly after midnight on November 5, 1605, and was sentenced to be executed. Ever since then, the British have celebrated the thwarting of the Gunpowder Plot on every November 5, which has become known as "Guy Fawkes Night." These celebrations traditionally include fireworks and the burning of a masked effigy of Fawkes in a bonfire. However, William Harrison Ainsworth's 1841 novel *Guy Fawkes; or, The Gunpowder Treason* recast Fawkes as a sympathetic antihero, and Fawkes thereafter became a hero in serials in "penny dreadfuls" and children's books. Moore, via V, uses Fawkes as a symbol of rebellion against authoritarian rule.

V is an anarchist who commits assassinations to punish his oppressors from the concentration camp, and stages highly theatrical acts of sabotage in order to induce the British populace to rise in revolution and overthrow their fascist rulers.

The other leading character of *V for Vendetta* is Evey Hammond, a young woman whom V rescues from fascist policemen on November 5, 1997. After blowing up the Houses of Parliament, V takes Evey to live at his secret headquarters, the Shadow Cabinet, and she eventually becomes his protégé and heir.

V for Vendetta debuted in *Warrior* #1 (March 1982), a black-and-white comics anthology mag-



In 2005 Hugo Weaving starred in the movie version of *V for Vendetta*. (Warner Bros./DC Comics / The Kobal Collection / Appleby, David.)

azine that was published in the United Kingdom by Quality Communications. (This is a different company than the 1940s American publisher that was known as Quality Comics.) Alan Moore's version of *Marvelman* (later called *Miracleman*) premiered in the same issue. Quality canceled *Warrior* in 1985, before the *V for Vendetta* serial was finished. America's DC Comics then signed Moore and Lloyd to complete the story. DC began publishing a ten-issue *V for Vendetta* series in 1988, first reprinting the *Warrior* episodes in color, and then running the new material that brought the story to its conclusion. DC then repackaged the series in graphic novel format, and this version has remained in print into the present.

In co-creating and writing *V for Vendetta,* Moore has stated that he drew on many influences, including Batman, the Shadow, Robin Hood, the Marvel UK superhero Night Raven, works by George Orwell (*1984*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), and Harlan Ellison ("'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman," about a trickster rebel), the television series *The Prisoner,* and even Vincent Price's revenge thriller films, *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* and *Theatre of Blood*.

In 2008, Warner Bros. released a feature film adaptation of *V for Vendetta,* that was directed by James McTeigue, and written by Andy and Larry Wachowski, the brothers who are best known as the writers and directors of *The Matrix* movie trilogy. Hugo Weaving played V and Natalie Portman played Evey. Other major roles were played by Stephen Rea, John Hurt, and Stephen Fry. —*PS*

Valiant Heroes

Valiant is a company that looms large in the landscape of 1990s comics as a symbol—depending on whom you ask—of either the best qualities or the worst tendencies of the medium.

At a time when it seemed that every publisher was raiding comics history for dormant characters to build a universe around, Valiant took perhaps the least fashionable of all—the 1960s heroes of the mostly kiddie-oriented Gold Key Comics—and developed one of 1990s comics' slickest and hippest worlds. As it became vogue for comics lines to connect all their books in an intricate "continuity" that often required readers to have bought every issue of a given title (and all the ones related to it) to know what was going on, Valiant devised an involved, universe- and time-spanning scenario of the type that delights devoted fans, but which others blame for driving away comics' more casual mass audience. Valiant also pioneered the simultaneous use of its characters in other properties such as video games, which some see as the future of the medium and others see as a distraction of reader interest and creator talent from the comics themselves.

For the comics, Valiant specialized in both state-of-the-art treatments of popular themes and inventive reworkings of familiar concepts. The three main characters it acquired from Gold Key in 1990 were Solar, Man of the Atom; Turok, Son of Stone; and Magnus, Robot Fighter, 4000 A.D.

Solar had been a scientist who (like Charlton's Captain Atom before him, and Dr. Manhattan in Alan Moore's *Watchmen,* much later) literally pulls himself together after a catastrophic nuclear accident, and finds he has obtained awesome powers in the process. In Valiant's reworking, these powers get out of hand, resulting in the destruction of his entire universe. He then travels to "ours," determined to make amends by becoming a champion of humanity (and in this he has his hands full, with, among other menaces, a race of "spider aliens" bent on subjugating Earth, and that he battles across the world and through time).

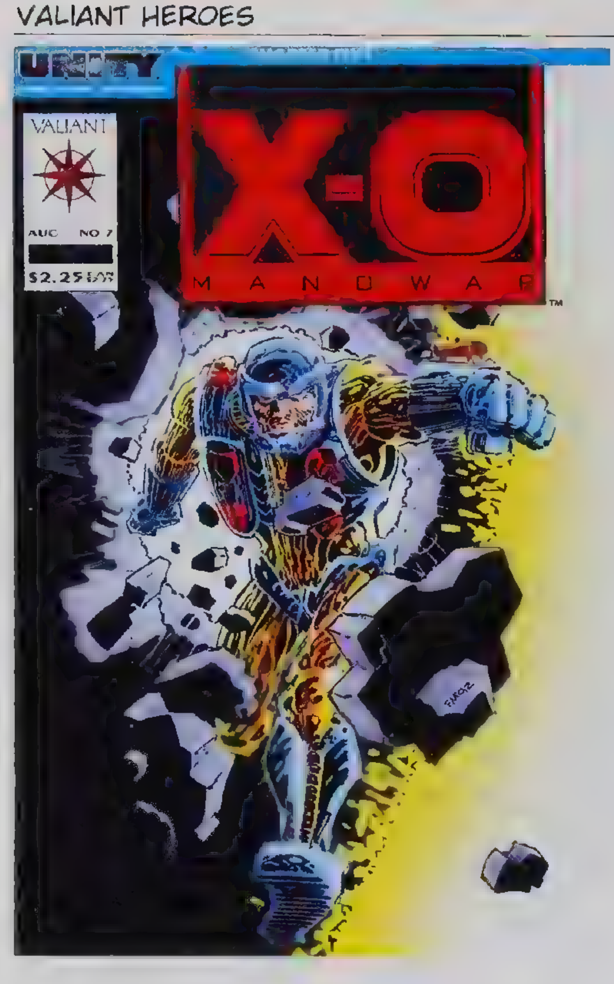
Turok was originally a pre-Columbian Native American who stumbles upon—and gets trapped in—a mystical valley where dinosaurs still dwell. First appearing in 1954, this scenario can be assumed as the source for everything from the mid-1970s kidvid hit *Land of the Lost* to Marvel's Ka-Zar character, so by the time of the 1993 Valiant relaunch (retitled *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter*) an overhaul was in order. In this version, the valley was actually an alien dimension, where Turok fought technologically enhanced, intelligent "bionosaurs."

Magnus was a citizen of "North Am" (a sprawling high-tech city covering most of the North American continent) in the far future. A highly trained martial artist able to best mechanical beings with his bare hands, he wages war on the renegade robots who have turned against the human race. In Valiant's 1990 version, the "evil" robots turn out to merely be those who are sentient and wish to be free ("freewills"), and Magnus rebels against the North Am society that would enslave them.

Among the many new characters Valiant developed to accompany its Gold Key acquisitions, X-O Manowar (debuting in 1992) compensated for his clumsy name with an elegant twist on the immortal warrior/reincarnated hero concept. Beginning as a fifth-century Visigoth named Aric Dacia, he was abducted by spider aliens seeking to enslave the mighty warrior. When a time-traveling Solar attacks the aliens, Dacia escapes their ship and steals one of their sophisticated weapons, the Manowar Class X-O Armor, which grants enhanced strength, blasts bolts of energy, and supplies almost immortalizing life-support. Unfortunately, 1,600 years have passed on Earth in the subjectively short time Dacia has been on the aliens' faster-than-light ship, and he must adapt to the twentieth century.

Valiant also developed some inventive spins on Marvel's X-Men concept. In Valiant's universe, those who represent the next step in human evolution are known not as mutants but as "Harbingers." The powerful telepath Toyo Harada establishes the Harbinger Foundation (in *Harbinger* #1, 1992) to recruit other such superbeings, who can help him in a vision of saving the human race from suicide—by taking it over. Expectedly, there are both Harbingers who support him and those who oppose him, along with the "H.A.R.D. Corps" (Harbinger Active Resistance Division), soldiers "recruited" from the ranks of coma patients, who are given special "psi-borg" implants to boost their brain activity and match the mind powers of the Harbingers (whom they battle on pain of being returned to their semi-living state).

The world of Valiant was also crisscrossed by a war between "geomancers" (sorcerers who



X-O Manowar #7 © 1992 VALIANT™, a division of Voyager Communications Inc. (Cover art by Frank Miller.)

protect the earth by drawing on its own energy) and Necromancers (their nihilistic opposites).

Valiant prospered, and transfixed its fans with company-wide events that would tie all these concepts together in intricate knots. The definitive one was "Unity," a 1992 epic in which Mothergod, a woman from Solar's original reality who gains similar powers in the same accident as he, seeks to rewrite history so that her own universe can live again, at the expense of the known Valiant cosmos. In this storyline readers learn that she is the one who first fitted the ordinary dinosaurs of Turok's "Lost Land" with the implants that made them murderous bionosaurs; that Magnus was actually the superstrong child of two twentieth-century Harbingers; that a geomancer then placed him in the year 4000 to protect humankind at a later date—you get the idea.

By 1997, Valiant (and its parent company Voyager Communications) was acquired by Acclaim Entertainment. As the backbone of the company, Acclaim's videogames garnered more of a focus than its comics, and the latter medium started drastically losing audiences to the former. Acclaim's comic output grew sporadic, though all of comics fandom anticipated a new crossover epic called *Unity 2000* (1999), which was projected for six issues and only ever shipped three.

In 2005, Acclaim entered Chapter 7 bankruptcy. A new company, Valiant Entertainment, that owned the rights to the Valiant Comics properties, arose in 2007 and began publishing graphic novels the following year. However, the rights to the series to *Magnus, Solar,* and *Turok* had reverted, in 2002, to Random House, which now owns the Gold Key properties. Dark Horse Comics licensed these characters and began publishing books reprinting the original Gold Key *Doctor Solar, Magnus, Robot Fighter,* and *Turok* stories. In 2010, Dark Horse launched new series, all written by Jim Shooter, for *Magnus, Robot Fighter* (drawn by Bill Reinhold), *Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom* (drawn by Dennis Calero), *Turok, Son of Stone* (drawn by Eduardo Francisco), and *Mighty Samson* (drawn by Patrick Olliffe).

With Shooter and the Gold Key heroes at Dark Horse, reviving the Valiant Universe as its fans knew it in the 1990s seems improbable. Valiant remains one of the most fondly remembered players in what was, in its heyday, a very crowded field. And as fans nurtured on the company's mythos of time-traveling, death-cheating warriors will tell you, anything's possible. —*AMC & PS*

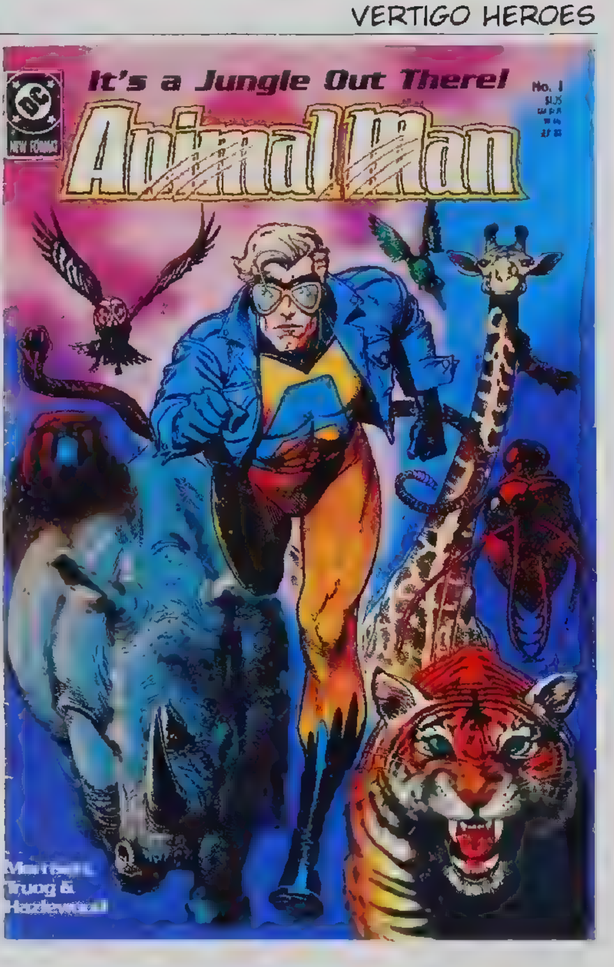
Vertigo Heroes

"We've been called horror, mature, sophisticated, dark fantasy,cutting-edge, and just plain weird," editor Karen Berger said in *Vertigo Preview* (1992). "Tired of tired misnomers, and not even having a collective name, we decided to define ourselves." The name chosen for DC Comics' imprint of off-kilter books was Vertigo, and its publications were christened a "bold new line of comics for mature readers."

The genesis of Vertigo began in the 1980s, when writer Alan Moore revitalized DC swamp monster/sometime-superhero book *Saga of the Swamp Thing,* beginning with issue #20 (January 1984). Moore's take on the story existed in a darker corner of the DC universe, where monsters and shadows were far more horrifying than any supervillain attack. Although Swamp Thing interacted occasionally with DC heroes such as the Justice League, Superman, and Batman, the sentient plant was eventually revealed to be an "Earth elemental," whose powers were akin to a force of nature. With the success of *Swamp Thing,* other avant garde, dark, and revisionist takes on DC heroes were soon put into motion, including *Animal Man, Sandman, Black Orchid, Doom Patrol,* and *Shade the Changing Man.* Like Moore, the writers for all of the series came from the British Isles (though Vertigo would eventually employ American writers as well).

Animal Man (1988–1995) starred a nearly forgotten 1960s hero who could take on the powers of animals around him. Reinvented by writer Grant Morrison, family man Buddy Baker attempts to revive his superhero career, discovering that his connection to animals runs deeper than he had previously thought, thanks to his alien-initiated link to a "morphogenic field" generated by all living things. By the end of Morrison's run, with issues #25–#26 (July–August 1990), Baker even realized that he was a comic book character. Future issues continued the exploration of Baker's connection to nature, as well as animal rights issues, suicide, and religion. *Animal Man* became a Vertigo title with issue #57 (March 1993).

Sandman (1989 1996) was the redefinition of a 1942 hero, previously redefined by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby for *Adventure Comics,* who had also enjoyed adventures with the Justice Society of America. Revived (in name only) in 1974, the older hero became more of a superheroic guardian of dreams for a short-lived series. When writer Neil Gaiman reinvented *Sandman* in 1989, for another series, he was now Morpheus, the Lord of Dreams, and one of seven supernatural beings called the Endless. Though a few stories touched base with the DC superhero universe—even explaining Morpheus' connection to the previous Sandmans of comic book history—most of the stories were dark fantasy, myths, and fairy tales, set in many different time periods with ever-changing casts. *Sandman* became a Vertigo series with issue #47 (March 1993), and soon became one of the most prestigious titles in DC's publishing history, winning Gaiman accolades for his writing, including a World Fantasy Award.



Animal Man #1 © 1988 DC Comics. (Cover art by Brian Bolland.)

Black Orchid (1993–1995) was the most forgotten of the Vertigo characters when she was revived. Debuting in *Adventure Comics* #428 (August 1973), she was a superstrong flying woman whose identity and origin remained a mystery. Neil Gaiman revived her in 1988, for a miniseries painted by Dave McKean, in which her origins were revealed, and Batman guest-starred. A short-lived Vertigo series debuted in September 1993, and lasted until June 1995.

Doom Patrol (1987–1995) was initially the most famous of the Vertigo-to-be titles, based as it was on a 1963 superhero team of adventurers. The series was revived in 1987, with a partially new cast of super-characters, but with issue #19

(February 1989), writer Grant Morrison arrived to make things more unusual. The Doom Patrol had been called comics' strangest heroes, and Morrison upped that ante, turning Negative Man into the hermaphroditic Rebis, and adding in multiple-personality heroine Crazy Jane, monkey-faced girl Dorothy Spinner (who could bring things from her imagination to life), and Danny the Street, a sentient, transvestite street that could teleport. Morrison's run included villains such as the Scissor Men, the Brotherhood of Dada, and the anagram-speaking men from N.O.W.H.E.R.E. Morrison left with *Doom Patrol* #63 (January 1993), and new writer Rachel Pollack took over with the first Vertigo issue, #64 (March 1993), continuing Morrison's surrealistic tone.

Shade the Changing Man (1990–1996) was a strange Steve Ditko–created concept from 1977, in which an other-dimensional alien with an illusion-projecting M-vest was on the run. After eight issues it disappeared, but the concept was revived, in 1990, by writer Peter Milligan. As before, Rac Shade is on the run, and his M-vest (now called a "madness vest") helps him in his adventures as he traverses America on a strange road trip. Shade inhabits the body of a killer, and his companion on the trip just happens to be the daughter of his victims. The series was surrealistic to begin with, and obsessed with pop culture, and with #33's switch to Vertigo (March 1993), Shade and friends settled down to live in a hotel that attracted strangeness. Inventive to the end, *Shade* remained more of an experimental superhero series than a crime-fighting adventure book.

As with *Shade* and the others, the switch to Vertigo, in fact, almost completely erased the superhero concept from most titles. *Sandman Mystery Theatre* (1993–1999) told adventures of the 1940s hero but was more pulp adventuring than flashy costumes. *Hellblazer* (1988–present) was a *Swamp Thing* spin-off about chain-smoking magician John Constantine and his brushes with the occult; it was released as a 2004 film starring Keanu Reeves in the title role. *The Books of Magic* (1990–1991 and 1994–2000) detail the adventures of bespectacled British pre-teen magician-to-be Timothy Hunter (to whom the later Harry Potter bears a striking resemblance); Hunter was mentored by DC occult heroes such as the Phantom Stranger, Mr. E, Constantine, and Dr. Occult. *Kid Eternity* (1991 and 1993–1994) revived a 1946 Quality Comics adolescent who could summon historic heroes to help him; the series updated him to be a bitter adult whose summonings brought demons instead.

Although Vertigo remains one of DC's most popular imprints, the stories have become less and less connected to the realm of superheroes as time has passed. To name two of the most talked-about series since the line's earlier reinvented-superhero days, psychedelic adventures filled the pages of *The Invisibles*, while *Preacher* presented a man who can channel the voice of God, sharing adventures with his girlfriend and a redneck vampire. But two constants have remained since Vertigo's founding: Many of the writers are British, and all of the books are as off-kilter, as the imprint's name suggests.

DC Comics became a subsidiary of DC Entertainment, Inc. in 2009, resulting in changes in DC Comics' leadership. Characters from the DC universe who had come under Vertigo's control went back to the DC universe line of comics. When DC relaunched its entire line of comics in September 2011, one of its new titles was *Justice League Dark* #1, featuring a new team of various characters who had appeared in Vertigo series over the previous two decades. They included John Constantine from *Hellblazer,* Deadman, the precognitive mystic Madame Xanadu, Shade the Changing Man, and the magician Zatanna. The new series was illustrated by Mikel Janin and written by long-time Vertigo author Peter Milligan (who is not British but Irish). This year also saw a new *Animal Man* series, written by Jeff Lemire, with art by Travel Foreman and Dan Green. *—AM & PS*

The Vigilante

It will probably surprise even the most devoted comics fans to learn that one of the longest-lasting heroes of the Golden Age of comics (1938–1954) was not Captain America, the Flash, or the Green Lantern, but the Vigilante.

This character was a backup feature in *Action Comics,* from late 1941 (issue #42) onward, created by legendary DC editor Mort Weisinger and pioneering artist Mort Meskin. The first adventure relates how Sheriff Sanders is gunned down by a band of outlaws led by one Judas Priest, in the dying days of the Old West. Vowing vengeance, his son Greg Sanders systematically hunts down the killers, one by one, and then decides to become a permanent "vigilante." Sanders soon becomes a successful country singer with his own radio show, but by donning a blue cowboy costume, topped off with a white Stetson, and a red scarf to cover his mouth, the "Prairie Troubadour" becomes the crime fighter known as the Vigilante.

In one of his earliest tales, the Vigilante came upon a crime scene in Chinatown, where a young boy's parents had been killed by gangsters. Our hero quickly decided to adopt the lad—seemingly known only as "Stuff"—as his ward and crime-fighting partner. It is worth noting, incidentally, that "Stuff" was the first significant Asian hero in comics history. The strip was in many ways an updated Western, with Greg Sanders and Stuff roaming the country from one radio show or concert to the next, invariably coming across wrongdoers wherever they went. The Vigilante rode a motorcycle rather than a horse, and relied on his lariat or six-guns to get him out of trouble. In more traditional superhero manner, he built up a stable of his own arch-villains, including the Fiddler, Dictionary, and the murderous, top-hatted midget, the Dummy.

The Vigilante strip had barely started before the character was recruited to the ranks of DC's second superhero group, the Seven Soldiers of Victory (in *Leading Comics* #1–#14, from 1941 to 1945), along with the Star-Spangled Kid, Stripesy, Green Arrow, Speedy, the Shining Knight, and the Crimson Avenger. The team was relatively short-lived, which perhaps indicates that the chief appeal of the Vigilante strip was its punchy brevity. Weisinger came from the pulps and had a real gift for packing his short, ten-page stories with both action and plot, and his strip was usually a highly entertaining read. Meskin was one of comics' first superstar artists, with a true talent for movement, and his artwork really flew off the page.

By the 1950s, Greg Sanders had moved onto television, and his Vigilante alter ego had acquired a very modern-looking, jet-powered "vigi-cycle." The strips were still well written and stylishly drawn (by Flash Gordon artist Dan Barry, among others) but in late 1954, after over 150 episodes, the strip was finally laid to rest, a victim of *Action Comics* cutting its page count. The character was reintroduced to comics readers years later, in a 1970 issue of *Justice League of America;* it seems that he had simply been in temporary retirement. A few new, well-crafted strips slipped out later in the decade, in the pages of *Adventure Comics* and *World's Finest,* revealing a strangely ageless Sanders still plying his trade on the concert circuit. The last of these stories (which appeared in *World's Finest* #248 in 1978) killed off the unfortunate Stuff (now a grown man) and introduced his son, Stuff Jr., who was last seen riding off into the sunset with the Vigilante.

In 1995, the Vigilante was finally given his own comic—albeit only a four-issue miniseries—although this featured an "untold" tale from the 1940s rather than a new set of contemporary stories. In the interim, another, wholly different Vigilante had risen from the pages of the *Teen Titans* and enjoyed a degree of success in his own self-titled, mid-1980s comic. This character was Adrian Chase, an ex-district attorney by day and a ruthless killer by night, hunting down the criminals whom the law could not touch ("It's time for the *little man* to win"). This Vigilante was one of numerous so-called anti-heroes who sprang up in the wake of Marvel's Punisher.

Chase was killed, but he was succeeded by a new Vigilante, Justin Powell, in a 2005–2006 *Vigilante* miniseries. Yet another Vigilante debuted in *Nightwing,* and graduated to his own *Vigilante* series (2009–2010). This Vigilante is Dorian Chase, the brother of the late Adrian. Greg Saunders, the original Vigilante, was apparently killed in *Seven Soldiers* #0 (April 2005), but turned up alive once more in *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen* #1 (December 2008).

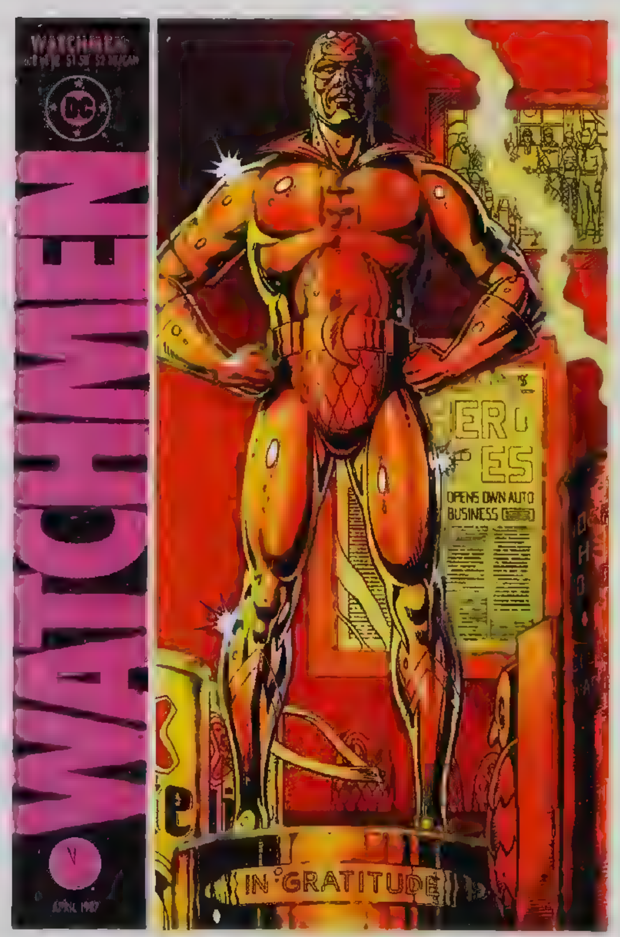
The Columbia movie serial *The Vigilante: Fighting Hero of the West* (1947), starred Ralph Byrd in the title role, and was loosely based on DC's 1940s version of the character. The original

Vigilante (Greg Saunders) has also appeared in two animated TV series: *Justice League Unlimited,* usually voiced by Nathan Fillion (of the TV series *Firefly* and *Castle*), and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold,* voiced by John DiMaggio (*Futurama*), who even sings a song in his role in the episode. —*DAR*

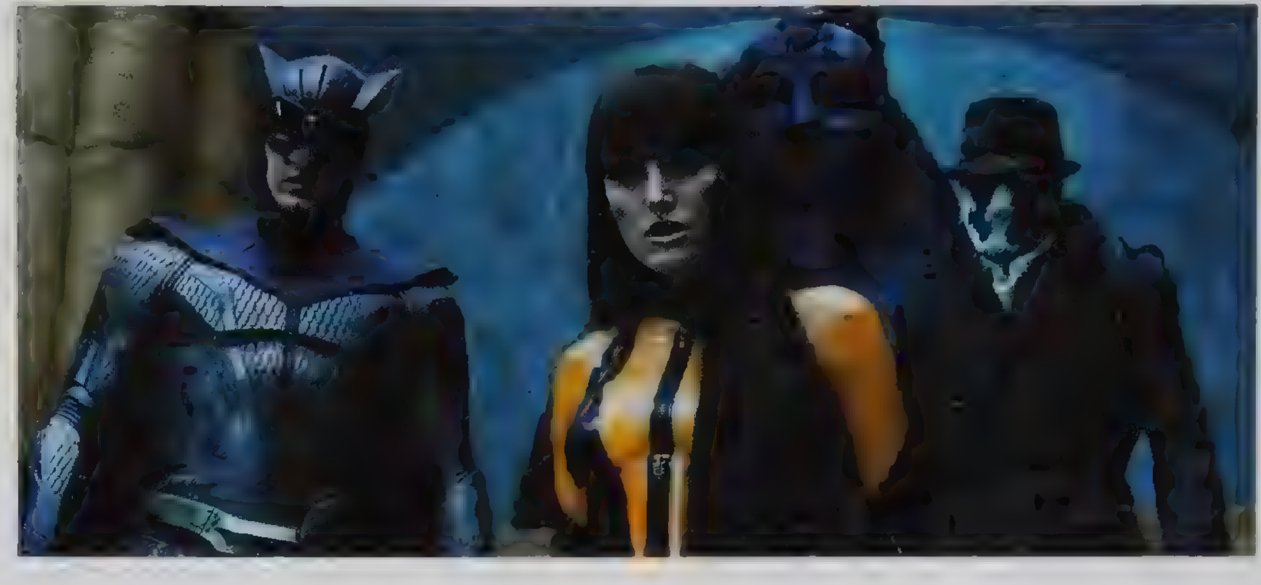
Watchmen

The year 1986 was a momentous one for both DC Comics and the comics industry as a whole, thanks to the release of the four-issue miniseries *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and the twelve-part *Watchmen,* which sold in enormous numbers and attracted unheard-of critical acclaim. *Watchmen* was the brainchild of the British creative team of writer Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons, who were established stars in their home country and were already beginning to make an impact in the United States. The original plan was to produce a twelve-issue miniseries using the Charlton Comics line of superheroes that DC had just licensed, but Moore's radical reworking was deemed too controversial (and too terminal in some cases), so the decision was made to create a miniseries using an all-new cast, set in a separate, subtly different world. *Watchmen* heroes borrow from the Charlton cast, however; for example, hero Rorschach is based on Charlton's the Question. *Watchmen* ran for twelve issues from September 1986 to October 1987.

Moore's script was set in a parallel universe from the early 1940s to the mid-1980s. Opening with a murder mystery and closing with a thwarted nuclear holocaust, *Watchmen* posited what it would be like if superheroes were real, how they would affect the world around them, and how everyday people would react to them. Moore created a world previously unexplored: superheroes who were morally ambivalent. What set *Watchmen* apart from typical superhero comics of the day was the insight of Moore's scripting—though Gibbons' elegant, detailed artwork made



Watchmen #8 © 1987 DC Comics. (Cover art by Dave Gibbons.)



Patrick Wilson as Nite Owl, Malin Akerman as Silk Spectre II, and Jackie Earle Haley as Rorschach in the well-received 2009 film *Watchmen*. (Warner Bros./DC Comics / The Kobal Collection.)

an enormous contribution as well. Moore crafted a complex story, with layers of meaning and depth of characterization never before seen in the superhero genre, drawing heavily on irony, symbolism, and multiple perspectives to tell his tale. Meant "to be read on a number of levels," according to Moore, "different little threads of continuity are effectively telling the same story from different angles."

In many respects, *Watchmen* was effectively the first postmodern superhero comic, examining the motivations, foibles, and desires that might drive people to don garish costumes and risk their lives each time they went on patrol. When describing his hero Rorschach, Moore admitted he "was to a degree intended to be a comment upon the vigilante super hero, because I have problems with that notion. I wanted to try and show readers that the obsessed vigilante would not necessarily be a playboy living in a giant Batcave under a mansion. He'd probably be a very lonely and almost dysfunctional guy in some ways." The series asked the question: If you had immense power, how would you use it? In the case of the sadistic Comedian and the sociopath Rorschach, power amplified and fed the characters' natural violence. For Dr. Manhattan—a being with almost limitless powers—it led to a growing isolation and indifference toward both his girlfriend (the reluctant superheroine Laurie Juspeczyk, a.k.a. Silk Spectre) and his fellow men; this alienation was well demonstrated by his move to Mars. For the "smartest man alive," Ozymandias, power forced on him the messianic role of the world's savior; indeed, in the series' denouement, he does prevent an impending apocalypse, albeit in a shocking way.

Watchmen was very much a product of its time, set against the background of the cold war and the ever-present real-life threat of nuclear devastation, but nevertheless it is still compelling reading in the twenty-first century. Within a year of the series' completion, it was released as a book, and multiple printings later is still in print in 2004. Together with *The Dark Knight Returns*, it laid the foundations for the graphic novel explosion and the massive growth of comic book collections that have transformed the industry. It also prompted the release of Watchmen posters, portfolios, badges, and T-shirts. There were persistent rumors of a film, but the critic Douglas Wolk insightfully noted in 2003 that "Watchmen … has been notoriously resistant to attempts to adapt it into a workable screenplay: its narrative about aging superheroes and nuclear panic is so deeply rooted in the comics form that it could no more be filmed than, say, *Citizen Kane* could be adapted into a novel."

Nevertheless, Warner Bros. released a *Watchmen* film in 2009. Directed by Zack Snyder, it had a large cast, including Malin Akerman as Silk Spectre II, Billy Crudup as Dr. Manhattan, Carla Gugino as Silk Spectre I, Matthew Goode as Ozymandias, Jackie Earle Haley as Rorschach, Jeffrey Dean Morgan as the Comedian, and Patrick Wilson as Nite Owl. The film was quite faithful to the plot and visual style of the original comics series, but within its 162-minute length could not fully explore the series' thematic depths. Critical reaction was divided, and the movie performed commercially below Warner Bros.' high expectations.

Moore and Gibbons still enjoy enormous popularity among comics enthusiasts, though both have refused all requests for a sequel, preferring to let the original comic stand on its own. In its wake, however, *Watchmen* has inspired such series as Kurt Busiek's *Astro City,* Alex Ross and Mark Waid's *Kingdom Come,* and countless other comics. Indeed, the *Watchmen*'s deconstruction of the superhero myth was so seductive that it had a profound impact on the industry as a whole. *—DAR*

WildC.A.T.S

Brought together by the multi-billionaire Lord Emp and the mysterious Void, a group of humans, half-humans, and alien Kherubim warriors protect Earth against the host-possessing aliens known as Daemonites. Emp's group, WildC.A.T.S, is a Covert Action Team, and its members include Spartan, Zealot, Maul, Voodoo, Grifter, and Warblade. Millennia ago, the warring Kherubim and Daemonites crashed on Earth, and their battle continues to this day. Now, the WildC.A.T.S will end the Daemonite threat or die trying.

Lord Emp (Jacob Marlowe) was a diminutive homeless man until Void helped him learn his true identity as a powerful Kherubim warrior who had lost his way. Becoming rich and founding HALO, Inc. in New York City, Emp worked with Void to gather the WildC.A.T.S team. Void (Adrianna Terishkova) is the silver-skinned manifestation of a dead Russian cosmonaut, combined with the Void essence which traveled back in time both to warn Marlowe about the Kherubim/Daemonite conflict, and to help him assemble the WildC.A.T.S team. Her computer-like mind, teleportation and telekinetic powers, and limited knowledge of future events are invaluable.

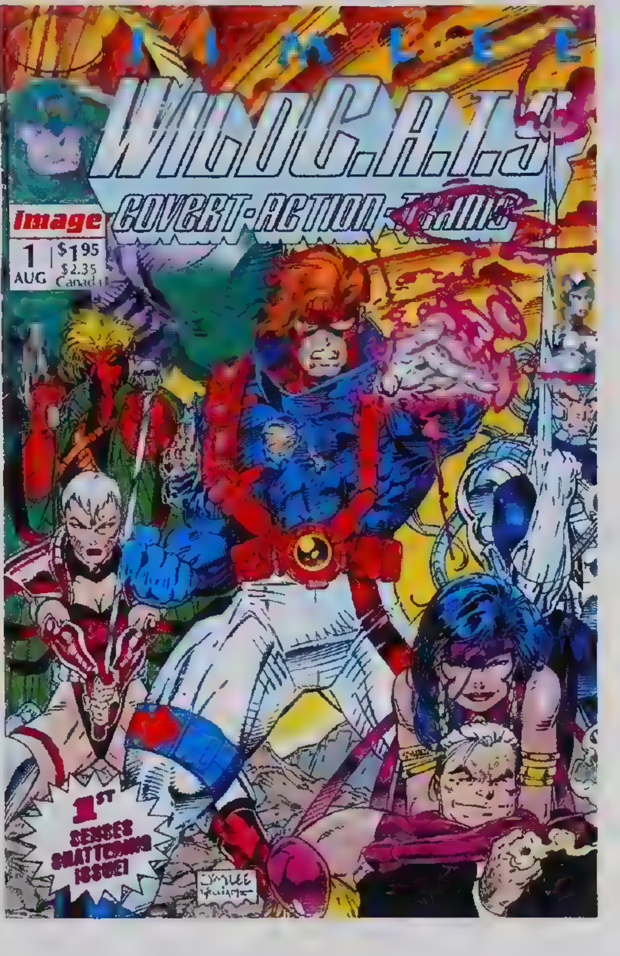
Spartan (Hadrian 7) is actually the soul and memories of a dying Kherubim warrior that has been transplanted into the body of a superstrong cyborg by Void and Marlowe. He can fire biomolecular blasts through his hands, and create plasma shields, and his Central Processing Unit can be downloaded into other bodies, making him nearly unkillable. Zealot is a thousand-year-old Kherubin warrior, who is an extraordinarily skilled fighter in the Coda techniques developed by a group of female warriors. She uses her weapons, including the Clef Blade, against the Daemonites.

Maul (Jeremy Stone) is the brilliant son of an archeologist who was really a "Gifted One"/crossbreed: part-human, part-Daemonite. He can grow to immense sizes, but his intelligence and self control wane the larger he gets. Voodoo (Priscilla Kitaen) is another crossbreed, and was once an exotic dancer. The curvaceous heroine can recognize Daemonites in any form, and can fire mental energies from the focal jewel she wears on her forehead.

Grifter (Cole Cash) is one of the most popular members of the team. With no real superpowers, this ex-con man and intelligence operative has turned his life around as a hero, using his uncanny marksmanship and Coda-trained fighting skills to right wrongs. Green-haired Warblade (Reno Bryce) is a computer-programming crossbreed, who can morph his hands into metal claws or other razor-sharp devices.

In their war against the Daemonites, the WildC.A.T.S have used a warplane known as MIRV (Multi-purpose Intercept/Reconnaissance Vehicle). They have also allied themselves with other heroes, including 1960s hero Mr. Majestic, the tactical response team Black Razors, the StormWatch team, gay techno-whiz Noir, Gen 13, and Zealot's sister, Savant. Villains they have faced include Coda assassin Artemis; four-armed Daemonite enforcer Karillion; body-stealing Dockwell and the other Daemonites (whose real appearance is somewhat reptilian); shape-changer Mr. White; the sorceress Tapestry; and Lord Hellspont, the flame-headed telekinetic leader of the Daemonites.

In early 1992, a sextet of extremely popular artists left their books at Marvel Comics *en*



WILDC.A.T.S: Covert Action Teams #1 © 1992 Jim Lee. (Cover art by Jim Lee and Brandon Choi.)

masse, and formed their own independent comic book company, Image Comics. One of the most popular of the group was Jim Lee, ex-artist of *Alpha Flight, Wolverine, Punisher,* and *X-Men*. He released his first book, *WildC.A.T.S* in August 1992, providing the art and co-writing with Brandon Choi. Despite plots that were difficult to follow, the series was a success. Fifty issues and an annual were produced by Lee's Image imprint, WildStorm Productions, before the series was canceled in June 1998; although Lee had quit producing the art, some issues were written by star author Alan Moore, and detailed artist Travis Charest provided a vigorous follow-up for Lee.

The second *Wildcats* series dropped the acronym and periods in its title, debuting in March 1999, after DC Comics bought the WildStorm line. Twenty-eight issues and an annual were published, and the series was again retired in September 2001. A third series, *Wildcats Version 3.0,* debuted in October 2002. In this latter series, a retired Spartan heads a multinational company called the Halo Corporation, and deals with the power such a group can wield, for evil or good.

In addition to the regular *WildC.A.T.S* series, numerous sourcebooks, specials, miniseries, and one-shots were produced. Crossovers with other publishers included *WildC.A.T.S/Aliens* (with Dark Horse) and multiple *WildC.A.T.S/X-Men* stories (with Marvel). Spin-off series were also produced, including miniseries for Grifter, Zealot, Voodoo, Backlash, and others. In September 1994, CBS debuted *Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.S* cartoon series, which lasted thirteen episodes and inspired an "animated style" comic book, called *WildC.A.T.S Adventures,* that ran for ten issues (1994–1995).

WildStorm relaunched the *WildC.A.T.S* comic in 2006, but only one issue of this fourth volume came out, written by Grant Morrison and drawn by Jim Lee. *WildC.A.T.S* Volume 5 started in 2008, originally written by Christos Gage, and continued until 2010, when DC Comics announced that it was shutting down the entire WildStorm imprint. However, a number of WildStorm characters have been integrated into DC Comics' own fictional universe. Among them is WildC.A.T.S member Grifter, who received his own new DC comics series in September 2011, written by Nathan Edmondson with art by CAFU. —*AM*

WildStorm Heroes

What if a coup were staged and everyone left? That was the question asked and answered in the comics medium in early 1992, when a sextet of extremely popular artists left their books at Marvel Comics *en masse,* and formed their own independent comic-book company, a collective known as Image Comics. One of the most popular of the group was Jim Lee, ex-artist of *Alpha Flight, Wolverine, Punisher,* and *X-Men.* Although his initial offerings did not have a sub-imprint name, and were copyrighted to Aegis Entertainment, Inc., the line of books Lee and his crew oversaw eventually became WildStorm Productions. Unlike some others of the Image group, WildStorm Productions would be incredibly prolific, pumping out dozens of series and spin-offs, all in an increasingly Byzantine and interconnected universe.

Lee's first book, *WildC.A.T.S,* debuted in August 1992, and it set the backdrop of the whole WildStorm universe to come. Millennia ago, the warring Kherubim and Daemonites crashed on Earth, and their battle continues to this day. Kherubim are essentially good warriors, while the Daemonites are reptilian creatures that can take over human host bodies for their nefarious plans. Almost every character that appeared in WildStorm books was somehow related to Kherubim or Daemonites. Those that weren't outright aliens themselves were often half-human crossbreeds, or they were created to fight them or join them. The other cohesive factor of the WildStorm universe was a vaguely sinister secret United States government organization, known as International Operations (I/O), which dabbled in covert special operative teams, bioengineering superhumans with the Gen Factor; and the study of psionics and quantum mechanics.

Besides *WildC.A.T.S* and its various spin-offs—*Voodoo, Zealot, Grifter, Warblade,* and others—WildStorm had special operative books that combined crime, war, and superheroes in one package. These included *Deathblow,* about an elite gun-wielding anti-hero; *Team 7,* about the special ops team that does the government's dirty work; and *Wetworks,* about a group of symbiotically armored operatives who combat the vampire nation. *Gen 13* was originally one of the most popular WildStorm titles, detailing the adventures of a group of Gen-Active teenagers, who escaped from I/O's control, and fought villains while still trying to fit into the world as semi-normal adolescents.

Union told the adventures of an alien Protectorate member from the planet Aegena who is tricked into going through an astral gate, and is now stranded on Earth. Using his plasma energy staff and powers of flight and strength, he sometimes aids StormWatch. Cosmic radiation from a comet that passed near Earth years ago has imbued many people with unusual powers. A number of them have banded together as the United Nations peace-keeping force known as StormWatch. A later incarnation of *StormWatch* led to the realignment of the team for a book known as *The Authority.*

Periodically, imprint-wide crossovers in the WildStorm universe—"WildStorm Rising," "Fire from Heaven"—shook up the status quo of the various books, resulting in cast changes, power changes, and deaths. The company tried to change with the times as well. Though it had been an early instigator of multiple covers and variant editions, it slacked off those marketing gimmicks by the end of the century. It also tried new ideas editorially, resulting in such experimental series as *Planetary,* with its intricate storylines about "mystery archeologists" who uncover the secrets of the world, many of them involving familiar superhumans of the twentieth century. WildStorm also partnered with superstar writer Alan Moore to create a new sub-imprint known as America's Best Comics (ABC), an ironic sobriquet given that they were created by an Englishman.

In early 1999, DC Comics bought WildStorm and all of its properties. Over the following year, several of the superhero series ended, then were relaunched with new directions and new creative teams. Although the WildStorm offices stayed in California, the imprint now had the selling power of DC Comics, and by extension, the Time-Warner media conglomerate.

However, in 2009, DC Comics became a subsidiary of DC Entertainment, Inc., leading to changes in the organization. In 2010, Lee became DC Comics' co-publisher, and DC announced that it was putting an end to the WildStorm imprint. Instead, DC decided to integrate various WildStorm characters into the main DC universe. Hence, with the relaunch of its entire comics line in September 2011, DC introduced two new series based on WildStorm characters: *Grifter* (the hero from *WildC.A.T.S*), written by Nathan Edmondson and illustrated by artist CAFU, and *Stormwatch,* written by Paul Cornell with art by Miguel Sepulveda. The new *Stormwatch* series includes Apollo and Midnighter from *The Authority,* and even a longtime DC universe hero, the Martian Manhunter. —*AM*

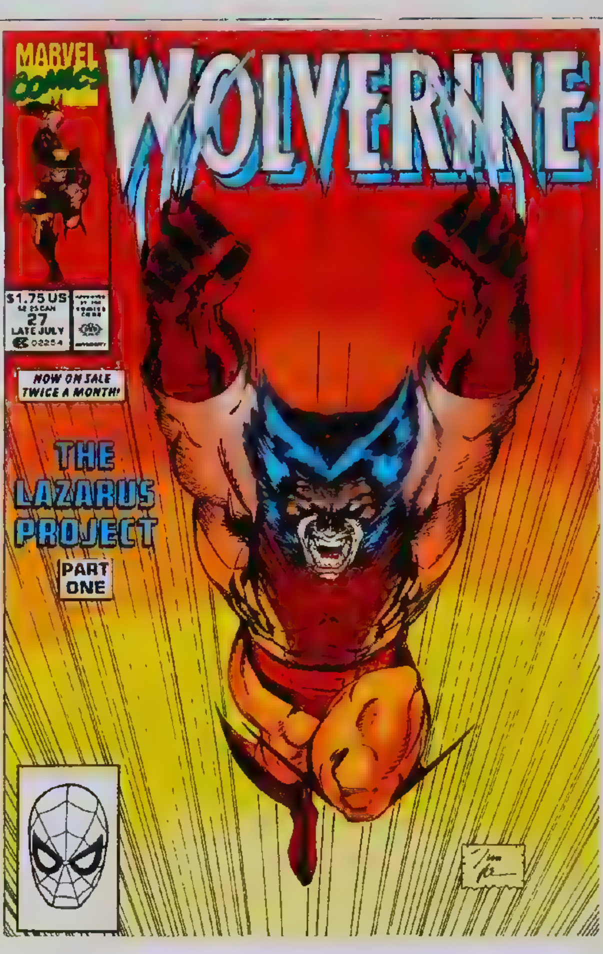
Wolverine

The most popular member of the mutant X-Men team, the claw-bearing Wolverine is "the best there is at what he does," according to him, but what he does isn't pretty … just pretty violent. A grumpy loner by nature, Wolverine is short, extremely hairy, and possesses a combination of mutant powers and scientific enhancements. His past has been—until the 2000s—shrouded in mystery, with false implanted memories and a century-plus lifespan complicating matters.

Introduced in *The Incredible Hulk* #180–#182 (October–December 1974), Wolverine was created by writer Len Wein at the behest of Marvel's then editor-in-chief Roy Thomas, who wanted a Canadian hero to bring in more north-of-the-border sales potential. Although artist Herb Trimpe drew the *Hulk* stories, it was Marvel art director John Romita Sr. who designed the costume and clawed look of Wolverine. The yellow-and-blue costume didn't exactly remind readers of the ferocious woodland animal, but the trio of claws Wolverine could pop out of the back of each hand (with a "snikt" sound effect each time), and the character's surly, violent attitude, made him stand out from other new heroes of the time.

As would eventually be shown, Wolverine is a dangerous loner, in the tradition of the Western anti-hero; he has no compunctions about killing, but treats the helpless well as long as they don't give him a tough time. He is, in short, Clint Eastwood with tights and claws. Unlike many traditional heroes, Wolverine is flawed, but it is his battles with those flaws—and an occasional "giving in" to his nastier impulses—that make him a popular character, especially among male fans.

Wolverine was soon transferred to the pages of the revitalized *X-Men* series with *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (Summer 1975), where he stayed in the background until artist John Byrne came onboard to work with writer Chris Claremont (*X-Men* #108, December 1977). Claremont and Byrne soon developed the scrappy character further, revealing that his mutant powers included tracking abilities, plus a healing factor that also slowed his growth; those powers had enabled him to survive an as-yet unexplained process whereby his entire skeleton had been coated in the Marvel Comics über-metal known as adamantium. The creators also showed that he had previously been a Canadian operative of Department H, and that he had worked with the Canadian supergroup Alpha Flight. Wolverine developed a crush on red-headed teammate Jean Grey, although he eventually fell in love with a Japanese woman known as Lady Mariko Yashida. Even as he found love, though, Wolverine still batted to control the violent "berserker rages" that threatened to break out of his unconscious and turn deadly for those near him.



Wolverine #27 © 1990 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Jim Lee.)

The Japanese connection was explored further with the first *Wolverine* miniseries in 1982, in a much-lauded story by Claremont and artist Frank Miller. It was clear that Wolverine—whose name had already been revealed to be Logan, and whose costume had been changed to a more animalistic brown and tan—had experienced both martial arts and samurai training in his past. In

November 1988, Wolverine was awarded his own regular monthly series, at which point the character spent more time on the Pacific island of Madripoor, running a bar while disguised as a ruffian known as "Patch." The anthology series *Marvel Comics Presents* debuted in September 1988, featuring a *Wolverine* serialized story in almost every issue. The most famous of those serials—a story known as "Weapon X"—ran in issues #73–#84 (March–September 1991). This story showed the experiments by which Wolverine's skeleton was covered with adamantium.

Bits and pieces of Wolverine's mysterious past were doled out throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but while many things were established as facts, others were shown to be falsified memory implants. It was clear that Wolverine had fought in the 1937 Spanish Civil War, and that he had also fought alongside Captain America and others during World War II, but he seemed older than that. His frequent foe Sabretooth, another feral animalistic fighter, was intended by his creators, Chris Claremont and John Byrne, to be Logan's father, but was later established as his former CIA teammate. (In Claremont's alternate history of the X-Men in *X-Men Forever,* Sabretooth is indeed Wolverine's father.)

In *X-Men* #25 (vol. 2, October 1993), the mutant villain Magneto forcibly removed the adamantium from Wolverine's skeleton and claws; the anti-hero struggled without his indestructible skeleton, but used the bone-claws that jutted from the backs of his hands just as effectively. The villain Apocalypse eventually re-bonded adamantium to Wolverine's bones. Still a loner, Logan has taken time out of his brooding, violent solo adventures to mentor some of the younger X-Men members such as Jubilee, Kitty Pryde, and others. He's also continued his pursuit of Jean Grey, much to the frustration of Grey's boyfriend, Scott Summers (better known as fellow X-Men member Cyclops).

Almost thirty years after he first appeared, the backstory for Logan was finally revealed in the six-part *Origin* miniseries (November 2001–April 2002), which was set near the end of the nineteenth century. Born James Howlett in Alberta, Canada, he is the sickly heir to a fortune. With a completely withdrawn mother and a busy father, James is cared for largely by a hired playmate, a red-haired girl named Rose. James has a peculiar relationship with "Dog," the rough-hewn son of the wild-haired family gardener, Thomas Logan; but as time wears on, the relationship spoils. After the gardener kills James' father, bony claws protrude from young James' hands for the first time, resulting in the death of Thomas (and leading to the suicide of James' mother). To save him from further trauma, Rose takes James to a mining colony to grow up, giving him the name Logan. As he enters puberty, James' mutant powers begin to manifest themselves more, but a later confrontation with the now-feral adult "Dog" leads to tragedy.

While *Origin* gave the foundation for Wolverine's past—including the fact that his healing ability helps to block out memories and mental trauma as well as heal physical wounds—many more questions remained to be answered. The Marvel Comics writers and artists will have plenty of time to tell these stories; *Wolverine* and *X-Men* remain among their most popular titles, and guest-appearances by the scrappy Canadian furball guarantee strong sales in any comic. Multiple "alternate future" titles have postulated that Logan will be one of the last survivors among Marvel's heroic pantheon as well.

For example, writer Mark Millar and artist Steve McNiven devised the storyline "Old Man Logan" (in *Wolverine* #66–72, 2008–2009), which is set in an alternate future in which supervillains have conquered the United States, most superheroes are dead, and a now aged Logan refuses to use his claws again. This inventive story has since been published as a graphic novel.

As a result of the Scarlet Witch's reshaping of reality in the miniseries *House of M* (2005–2006), Wolverine has regained all his lost memories. In 2006, Marvel launched a second *Wolverine* solo series, *Wolverine: Origins,* in which Wolverine investigates his rediscovered past. Perhaps his most startling discovery was that he has a son, Daken, who has claws and superpowers like his own; Daken debuted in *Wolverine: Origins* #10 (March 2007). Trained to be a living weapon by Wolverine's enemy Romulus, Daken became

Hugh Jackman's Wolverine faces his evil brother, Victor, played by Liev Schreiber, in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine.* (Marvel/20th Century-Fox / The Kobal Collection.)

Wolverine's adversary. Though he rebelled against Romulus, Daken continues his criminal career.

Another character, Laura Kinney, alias X-23, is a female clone of Wolverine. She first appeared in a 2003 episode of the animated TV series *X-Men: Evolution,* moved into the comics in *NYX* # 3 (February 2004), and received her own comics series in 2010.

Although Wolverine seems to be a loner by nature, he not only continues to be a member of the X-Men but joined the Avengers as well in 2005. Cyclops had Wolverine found a new version of X-Force in 2008.

As played by Hugh Jackman, Wolverine made a strong impression in the first live-action *X-Men* film in 2000. Jackman returned to the role in the sequels, *X2: X-Men United* (2003) and *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006). Jackman then starred as the lead character in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009), directed by Gavin Hood, with Liev Schreiber as Sabretooth, and released by Twentieth Century Fox. Jackman even has a cameo in *X-Men: First Class* (2011). Fox is developing a new film, *The Wolverine,* which will again star Jackman, and will be based on Claremont and Miller's classic 1982 comics miniseries.

Wolverine appears in all the *X Men* animated television series, and even leads the X-Men in the 2008–2009 animated series *Wolverine and the X-Men*. Wolverine stars in twelve episodes of the animated series *Marvel Anime,* which premiered in Japan in 2010 and in the United States in 2011. Wolverine also appears in numerous Marvel and *X-Men* video games, as well as starring in his own, including *Wolverine* (1991, LJN), *Wolverine: Adamantium Rage* (1994, Acclaim, LJN), and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009, Activision). *—AM & PS*

Wonder Woman

As the legend at the beginning of each story tells readers, she is "beautiful as Aphrodite, wise as Athena, stronger then Hercules, and swifter than Mercury." In her patriotic costume, she has fought the forces of evil since her 1942 debut, whether the threat came from Nazis, aliens, super villains, the Greek pantheon of gods, or those who would seek to oppress womanhood. In her sixty-plus year history, her adventures have almost exclusively been told by men, and yet she is one of the most recognizable icons of the feminist movement. She is Wonder Woman, Amazon princess from Paradise Island/Themyscira, and the most famous superwoman in world history.

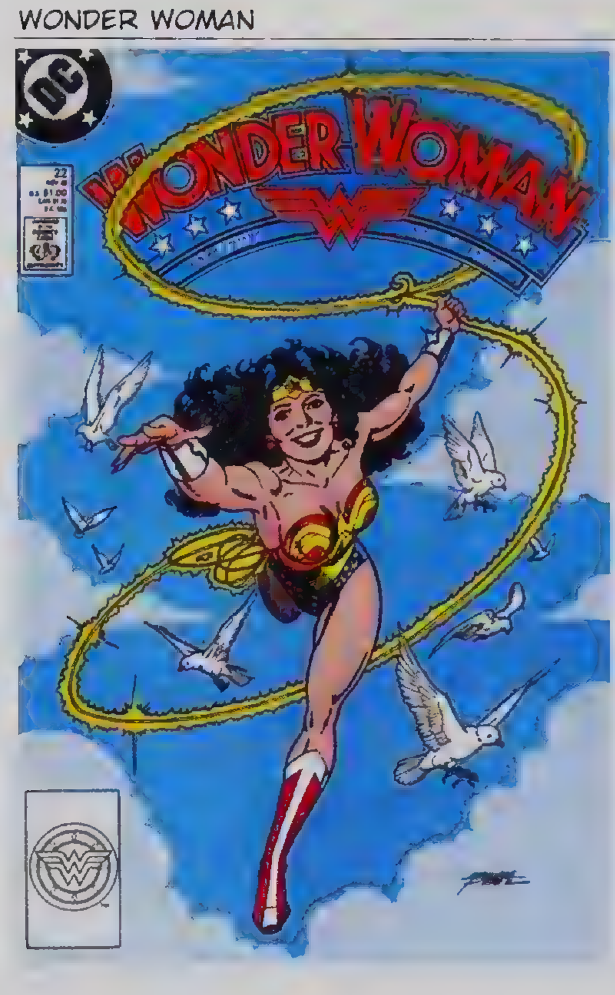
Wonder Woman was created by psychologist Dr. William Moulton Marston, using the pseudonym of "Charles Moulton." Marston was a bit of a maverick in the scientific community, in which he is credited as the main inventor of the lie detector test, and in his private life, in which he lived with his wife and another woman, and fathered children with both: Marston had written about comics in the early 1940s, and created Wonder Woman thereafter. She first appeared in a backup story in *All-Star Comics* #8 (December 1941–January 1942), then took the cover spot in *Sensation Comics* #1 (January 1942). She proved popular enough that a second series of her own soon appeared in summer 1942, titled *Wonder Woman*.

Details of Wonder Woman's origin changed many times over the years, but the main plot mostly stayed the same. Air Force pilot Steve Trevor's plane crashes on the uncharted Paradise Island, home of the immortal Amazons. The raven-haired Princess Diana finds Trevor, and the Amazons nurse him back to health. A tournament is held, officiated by Queen Hippolyta, for a champion of the Amazons to take the pilot back to "Man's World," but Diana is forbidden to enter. Disguising herself, she engages in the games—including the deadly "Bullets and Bracelets" ritual—winning them and being awarded the costume of Wonder Woman by the queen. Diana takes Trevor back to America in her invisible plane, and trades places with a look-alike army nurse named Diana Prince, who needs money to join her fiancé in South America. The new Diana Prince soon becomes Trevor's assistant, and yet he never suspects that she is also the "beautiful angel," Wonder Woman, who constantly helps him on his missions against spies and saboteurs.

In her first forty years of adventures, Wonder Woman wore a red bodice with gold eagle, a blue skirt with white stars (quickly discarded for blue shorts with stars), red boots with a white center stripe and upper edge, a gold belt and tiara, and bracelets on each wrist. The bracelets could deflect bullets or other missiles, while hanging from the belt was a magic golden lasso, which compelled anyone bound by it to tell the truth or obey her commands. Wonder Woman had prodigious strength, speed, and leaping abilities, and could send out "mental radio calls" that a mental radio device received. She was often aided in her adventures by corpulent Etta Candy and her Holliday College sorority sisters, the Holliday Girls.

Wonder Woman was popular with readers for many reasons. For a nation engulfed in World War II, her unwavering patriotism was welcome. Male readers enjoyed adventures with a scantily clad woman who often was put into bondage by male or female villains (and occasionally, by her fellow Amazons). Critics such as Frederick Wertham would later note that, not only was Wonder Woman a lesbian fantasy figure, but that the series was rife with bondage; the former point would not be addressed until 1990, while the latter was not even debatable, as almost every story Marston wrote included bondage (sometimes called "loving submission" in the comics). Finally, female readers liked the series because it presented a strong and confidant woman, who often gave lectures to others about the strength and power of womanhood, and the need for a strong sisterhood. In an industry wherein too many superheroines were used as either cheesecake titillation or adjuncts to their more powerful and popular male counterparts, Wonder Woman was a leader.

Wonder Woman's villains often included women such as Dr. Poison (Princess Maru masquerading as a man), Baroness Paula von Gun-



Wonder Woman #22 © 1988 DC Comics. (Cover art by George Pérez.)

ther (a Nazi who was later reformed by the Amazons), catlike villainess the Cheetah, and female gorilla-turned-human, Giganta, as well as males like craggy war god Mars and short, misogynist Dr. Psycho. Besides her appearances in her own two series, Wonder Woman was a featured member of the Justice Society of America, over in the pages of *All Star Comics*.

Marston wrote *Wonder Woman* until his death in May 1947, with almost every adventure being drawn by artist Harry G. Peter. Robert Kanigher succeeded Marston as writer in 1948, but the popularity of comics was crashing in the postwar years. The heroine last appeared with the Justice Society in *All Star Comics* #57 (February 1951), and was gone from *Sensation* after issue #106 (November–December 1951), leaving her bimonthly series as the sole Wonder Woman adventure source. *Wonder Woman* began featuring her in stories wherein she wrote advice columns, went to Hollywood, faced aliens and dinosaurs, fought to protect her secret identity, and entertained marriage proposals from monsters. Peter was replaced by artists Ross Andru and Mike Esposito, among others.

Kaniger also introduced many elements into the mythos that mucked with established continuity, including adventures of a younger Wonder Woman, as Wonder Girl and Wonder Tot, and featuring origins for everything from the robot plane to her magic tiara. Romantic suitors for the various ages of Wonder Woman were no longer limited to Trevor, as Kaniger added Merman/Merboy, Birdman/Bird-boy, and even the gooey Glop. Villains tended toward the bizarre, as in the case of the giant Chinese egg known as Egg Fu, diminutive Mouse Man, wispy Paper Man, or multilegged Crimson Centipede.

Wonder Woman was a founding member of the Justice League of America, appearing in their first story in *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (February–March 1960). A few years later, Wonder Girl joined the Teen Titans in *The Brave and the Bold* #60 (June–July 1965), though this version of the teen heroine was not a younger Wonder Woman, but a girl named Donna Troy, whom Wonder Woman had rescued as a baby, and who had been raised on Paradise Island. In 1968, Kaniger left the writing reigns of *Wonder Woman*, and eventually writer Denny O'Neil and artists Mike Sekowsky and Dick Giordano came on board. With issue #178 (September-October 1968), Diana Prince was stripped of her superpowers and costume, and she became a mod-dressed, undercover adventure heroine, partial to wearing white-zippered leather suits and thigh-high boots. Mentored by a blind man named I-Ching in martial arts, Prince dealt with the death of Trevor (he was later resurrected, then killed, then resurrected, etc.), fought Catwoman and Dr. Cyber, and dealt with feminist issues of the times. Famed science fiction author Samuel R. Delany scripted issues #202 -#203 (September–December 1972), the latter of which was cover-bannered as a "Special! Women's Lib Issue."

That issue would also prove to be the last of the powerless *Wonder Woman* issues as well. Feminist leader Gloria Steinem had cover-featured the heroine on the July 1972 debut issue of *Ms.* magazine, and had helped assemble a 1972 hardcover collection of Wonder Woman's adventures. Her introduction in that book promised, "In 1973, *Wonder Woman* comics will be born again, I hope with the feminism and strength of the original Wonder Woman—*my* Wonder Woman—restored." Issue #204 did just that, reintroducing the heroine's costume and powers; it also introduced a black Amazon named Nubia as a sometime foe of Princess Diana.

Wonder Woman's profile grew during the 1970s, largely due to the media. Besides Steinem's feminist support, Wonder Woman appeared as an animated character on ABC's *Super Friends,* beginning in 1973 and continuing for thirteen seasons. She also appeared in 1974 in a badly received TV movie starring Cathy Lee Crosby that had little to do with the comic book character; much stronger was the series that began the following year, which starred Lynda Carter. The statuesque former Miss World USA perfectly embodied the Amazing Amazon, and early scripts were very faithful to the World War II comics. Later seasons, moving the time frame to the 1970s, were less faithful to their progenitors, but Carter was never anything less than spectacular to watch, as she embodied the world's most famous superheroine.

Some of the 1970s *Wonder Woman* comics shifted stories back to World War II to match the television show, but DC continuity established that the World War II Wonder Woman was actually living on Earth-Two, a parallel world on which she had begun her adventures in the 1940s and joined the Justice Society. The Earth-One version was younger, and began her team adventures with the Justice League. Occasionally, the characters would meet, generally in the pages of *Justice League of America.*

In *Wonder Woman* #288 (February 1982), the costume of Wonder Woman was significantly altered. The gold eagle on the bodice was replaced with a stylized double-W symbol. The move marked not only the character's fortieth anniversary, but also the establishment of the new Wonder Woman Foundation, a charitable organization created by DC Comics President Jenette Kahn.

Due to what they felt was increasingly convoluted continuity, DC launched a twelve-issue series called *Crisis on Infinite Earths,* in April 1985. The end result of the series was that the DC universe would be "reset" to have only one Earth, and one version of every hero and heroine. *Wonder Woman* #329 (February 1986) featured the wedding of Wonder Woman and Steve Trevor, but it was to be the end of their happiness. *Crisis* wiped out their continuity and existence, and Wonder Woman would be reinvented. A retro-style miniseries called *The Legend of Wonder Woman,* drawn by Trina Robbins, was released in May–August 1986; it was the first time a female artist had drawn a *Wonder Woman* book (Dann Thomas co-scripted February 1983's issue #300, and was thus the character's first female writer).

A grand relaunch of *Wonder Woman* occurred with issue #1 of a new series in February 1987. Superstar artist George Pérez (also the *Crisis* illustrator) signed on to guide the new series, initially working with writers Greg Potter and Len Wein, before taking over the writing reigns himself. The relaunched *Wonder Woman* shared a similar origin to her predecessor, though the backstory of the Amazons and involvement of the Greek gods were a stronger part of the series. Here, as before, Queen Hippolyta had formed her daughter as a clay statue, whom the gods brought to life. Diana is raised on Themyscira (the renamed Paradise Island), and possesses gifts given to her by the gods, including superhuman strength and speed, and the ability to fly. When the war god Ares threatens the Earth, the pantheon decrees that the Amazons send a champion out into the world to oppose him; after winning a tournament, Diana becomes that champion. Outfitted with a costume inspired by a female aviator the Amazons had known in the past (Diana Trevor, mother of Steve Trevor), Wonder Woman ventures out into the world.

Pérez and company established a number of new details for Wonder Woman as well. She was now a latecomer to the hero world, joining a later incarnation of the Justice League (Black Canary took her spot in history). She lived in Boston, with Greek history professor Julia Kapatelis and her daughter Cassie. She had no invisible plane, though her "Lasso of Truth" (woven from the Girdle of Gaea) still compelled people to tell the truth.

She had no secret identity, but existed as an ambassador from Themyscira to the world, attempting to teach lessons of love, peace, and the power of womanhood. Steve Trevor was now a much older man who eventually married Etta Candy. Although she engaged villains such as Cheetah, Silver Swan, or Doctor Psycho, Diana was just as often in conflict with mythological threats to humankind from Ares, the witch Circe, Eris the goddess of discord, or other forces of evil.

The stories in the revamped *Wonder Woman* were densely plotted, and refused to shy away from controversy. A gay man first appeared in issue #20 (September 1988), before the Amazons' Sapphic sexuality was addressed in issue #38 (January 1990), while issue #46 (September 1990) dealt with the fallout from a teen suicide. Pérez was also keenly aware of the lack of female involvement in *Wonder Woman*'s history; though his editor was a woman, Karen Berger, he also wrote the 1989 *Wonder Woman Annual* stories to be drawn by female artists, and he eventually worked with co-writer Mindy Newell and artist Jill Thompson on the series.

Following Pérez's departure with issue #62 (February 1992), *Wonder Woman* went through a series of creative teams, each of which attempted to put their own mark on the heroine, for better or worse. Brian Bolland signed aboard to do fantastic covers, but the 1992–1995 issues are remembered by most as the era that featured Wonder Woman in space, Wonder Woman taking a job at Taco Whiz, Wonder Woman being replaced by rogue red-headed Amazon Artemis, and Wonder Woman changing from shorts to a star-spangled thong.

Popular writer-artist John Byrne took over the series with issue #101 (September 1995), moving Diana to Gateway City, replacing her supporting cast with similar characters Helena Sandsmark and daughter Cassandra "Cassie" Sandsmark, killing half the Amazons, and pitting her against villains such as Fourth World ruler Darkseid, Arthurian witch Morgan Le Fay, Dr. Psycho, Cheetah, and others. Byrne reintroduced the invisible plane, and turned Cassie into a new Wonder Girl, then killed Diana, had her resurrected as the Goddess of Truth, and had Hippolyta take over her role as Wonder Woman. Continuity was a casualty in the following storylines, in which Hippolyta-as-Wonder Woman was inserted backward in time to World War II adventures with the Justice Society, and Donna Troy (the ex-Wonder Girl, now Troia) was given an extraordinarily convoluted origin—the latest in her long line of origin revisions.

Diana became Wonder Woman again in Byrne's final issue (#136, August 1998), followed by a few years of rotating creative teams. With *Wonder Woman* #164 (January 2001), writer-artist Phil Jimenez came aboard to revamp the title yet again, but his stories harkened back to the strength of the Pérez run. Jimenez attempted to straighten out the (once again) convoluted history of Wonder Woman, while pitting her against such villains as the Joker, Silver Swan, Circe, a new male Cheetah, Giganta, and others. He also introduced a new male love interest, an African American man named Trevor Barnes. Unfortunately, Jimenez's work was affected by a number of company-wide crossovers mandated by DC, including one—*Our Worlds at War*—which forced upon him the death of Hippolyta. Later, Jimenez reintroduced the concept of Wonder Woman spinning into her costume (a staple of the 1970s comics and the TV series), and even utilized some costume elements from the television show. His final issue, #188 (March 2003) was a virtual love letter to every incarnation of Wonder Woman throughout her sixty-one-year history.

Following a six-issue, semi-return to the non-powered jumpsuit-wearing Wonder Woman, the series rebounded with another new creative team. In issue #195, novelist Greg Rucka, and artists Drew Johnson and Ray Snyder, came aboard to redefine the character. Gone were elements that the team felt demeaned the heroine, as Wonder Woman published an autobiographical book of essays (titled *Reflections*) and embarked on a proactive stance on making the world a safer and better place. Behind the scenes, Ares,

Lynda Carter starred in the successful television series *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman*, which ran from 1975 to 1979. (Warner Bros. TV/DC Comics / The Kobal Collection.)

Doctor Psycho, and others are plotting to bring the heroine down, but it is unlikely that DC's female figurehead will be bested easily.

In the series *Infinite Crisis* (2005–2006) Wonder Woman's continuity was past revised, so that she once again had been a founding member of the Justice League of America.

In 2006, DC Comics launched the third new *Wonder Woman* comics series, written by television writer Allan Heinberg and drawn by Terry Dodson. In it Wonder Woman adopted the bespectacled secret identity of Diana Prince, now a secret agent working for the U. S. government's Department of Metahuman Affairs. Gail Simone took over writing *Wonder Woman* in 2007, and has had the longest run writing the character of any female writer to date. Simone was succeeded on the series by J. Michael Straczynski in 2010.

In a controversial move that same year, Wonder Woman received a new costume, designed by DC co-publisher Jim Lee. including a black jacket and long, black, skin-tight pants. Readers should have expected that such a radical change to Wonder Woman's iconic costume would not last, and it didn't.

When DC Comics relaunched its entire comics line in September 2011, Wonder Woman starred in a new series written by Bran Azzarello with art by Cliff Chiang, as well as being featured in the new *Justice League* series as a founding member. Jim Lee designed yet another new costume for Wonder Woman, removing the jacket, and shortening the pants to knee length. It remains to be seen how long it will be before her traditional costume once more returns.

Over six decades, Wonder Woman's likeness and logo have appeared on apparel, dolls and action figures, puppets, puzzles, school supplies, kitchenware, costumes, lunch boxes, candy dispensers, night lights, music boxes, telephones, cake pans, model kits, valentines, Christmas ornaments, and even packaged macaroni. Audio adventures of the heroine appeared on record and tape in the 1960s and 1970s, while a daily newspaper strip saw print in 1944–1945. She appeared weekly in the animated adventures of Cartoon Network's *Justice League* and regularly when the series was retitled and revamped, in 2004, as *Justice League Unlimited,* which continued until 2006, and a *Wonder Woman* feature film has been in development for years. In 2010, Warner Bros. Television and writer/producer David E. Kelley developed a new Wonder Woman television series; although NBC commissioned the making of a pilot episode, they decided against buying the series.

Although she is not the first superheroine, Wonder Woman is the most famous, the longest-lived, and the most popular. Appealing to a vast demographic, she is the paragon not just of patriotism, but of womanhood itself. Whether preaching the loving submission and strength of sisterhood of her early years, or the diversity, tolerance, and love for humankind of her current incarnation, Wonder Woman has—as her TV theme asserted—arrived to change the world. And we are all the better for having her in it. —*AM*

X-Men

To the world at large, the X-Men have been an overnight success on the back of well-received movies, when in fact their rise has been a nearly fifty-year crawl, punctuated by false starts and protracted editorial caution in initially expanding the franchise.

Since their 1963 introduction, the X-Men have served as a metaphor for cultural intolerance. This, though, is predicated on the shaky foundation that the humans populating Marvel Comics' psuedo-Earth are bigoted toward those with inherent superhuman abilities—otherwise known as mutants—while reserving their acclaim for superheroes whose powers were accidentally acquired or technologically conferred. The concept of a mutant as a simultaneously persecuted and amazingly unique creature hit home to readers in the turbulent 1960s, and was a concept that any non-Anglo reader could personally relate to. Created by the prolific Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the first issue of *X-Men* introduced half a dozen characters who are still appearing regularly forty years later, and a villain, Magneto, who has been a mainstay of Marvel Comics since his inception.

The guiding light of the X-Men is the distinctively bald and wheelchair-confined Professor Charles Xavier, also known as Professor X. A disability was of minor consequence to the world's most powerful telepath, who engineered a dream of guiding other mutants to use their abilities for the betterment of humankind. His means for doing so was founding Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in Westchester County, New York, away from the prying eyes of the public.

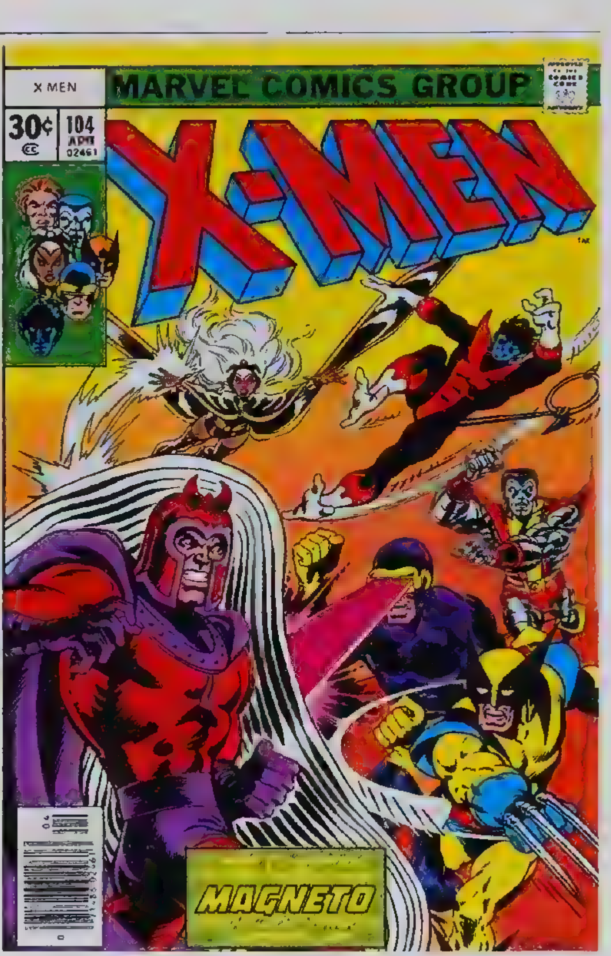
His first pupil was Scott Summers, cursed through emitting concussive force blasts from his eyes, beams that are mysteriously contained by the ruby quartz visor he permanently wears. As Cyclops he was field leader of the original X-Men, and plays a major role to this day.

Xavier's first mutant student was Jean Grey; she was, however, the last of the five original X-Men to join the team. Given the code name Marvel Girl, she had telekinetic powers, enabling her to levitate objects and herself. Later, Xavier allowed her to utilize her telepathic abilities as well. From the beginning, the beautiful redheaded Jean and Scott were in love with each other, but were too shy to admit it to one another for years.

Hank McCoy's brutish, almost simian form and athletic ability resulted in his being called the Beast, a code name that belied a prodigious intellect, both artistic and scientific. Bobby Drake, alias Iceman, was the mirror image of long-standing Marvel hero the Human Torch. Initially a mobile snowman, he has been refined into a sleeker ice-covered hero, and among other abilities is able to generate sheets of ice from his hands (ice sheets on which he travels). Bizarrely, having no connection with Spider-Man in the comics, Iceman was one of the "Amazing Friends" from Spider-Man's 1980s cartoon show *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*. The original team of X-Men was rounded out by Warren Worthington III. This rich playboy carried a secret in the form of giant wings, which remained strapped to his back in his civilian guise.

In the early issues of *X-Men,* Lee and Kirby created a number of memorable adversaries for the young mutant team. They drew a sharp distinction between Xavier, who believed that mutants and humans should coexist in peace, and Magneto, who contended that mutants could only guarantee their freedom through conquering the rest of the human race. Wielding control over the force of magnetism, Magneto posed a threat to the entire world. He organized the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, including superpowered siblings Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, who not only became superheroes but also turned out to be Magneto's children. Another menace was Xavier's half-brother Cain Marko, whom a mystical ruby transformed into the Juggernaut, a literally unstoppable powerhouse of superstrength. Dr. Bolivar Trask unleashed the Sentinels, his mutant-hunting robots, in the storyline in which Lee and Kirby most strongly established racial prejudice as the dominant theme of the X-Men series.

After Lee and Kirby left the series, Marvel's promising new writer Roy Thomas and artist Werner Roth took the reins of the series. The original incarnation of the X-Men had started strongly, but never really fired enough comic readers' enthusiasm to remain commercially successful. Perhaps the theme of outsiders was inherently off-putting in an early 1960s America, where cold war politics were still high on the agenda, and anyone not allowed at the front of the bus was better off not boarding in the first place. Toward the end of the 1960s, though, the comic sported some fine graphic realism from artist Neal Adams, and introduced two intriguing new heroes, who, however, never quite lived up to the excitement of their introduction. Alex Summers is brother to Scott, and as Havok channels solar energy into devastating blasts, while his partner, Lorna Dane (who eventually adopted the name Polaris), is able to control magnetic forces, although the reason for her striking green hair remains a mystery. Surprising as it may now seem, *X-Men* was canceled in 1970.



X-Men #104 © 1977 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Dave Cockrum.)

In the early 1970s, *X-Men* was soon revived as a comic by reprinting old stories, while the team members made sporadic guest appearances elsewhere; the Beast even maintaining his own short solo run in the pages of *Amazing Adventures*. The lack of activity didn't deter hardcore fans demanding the team's return. Roy Thomas, who had succeeded Stan Lee as Marvel's editor in chief, wanted to revive the X-Men as an international team of mutant heroes. The result was *Giant X-Men* #1 (1975), written by Len Wein and drawn by the late Dave Cockrum. In this issue, with the X-Men captured, Professor X traveled the globe to recruit a new team of mutants to rescue them.

Raised in Egypt, but of deeper African ancestry, Ororo Monroe can fly and control the weather as Storm. Colossus was found on a remote Ukranian farming collective, and the athletic, teleporting Nightcrawler was rescued from a German mob chasing him due to his demonic appearance. The Native American Thunderbird, alias John Proudstar, had superhuman strength, speed, reflexes, and agility, none of which prevented him from being an early casualty, and the pint-sized Canadian Wolverine had previously been seen using his claws to fight the Hulk. The team was rounded out with two characters who had fought the X-Men in the 1960s. Sean Cassidy, the Banshee, had employed his psionic screams under duress, but the fiercely nationalistic Sunfire resented American imperialism and the atomic bomb that resulted in both his mutation and his mother's death. He flies and fires beams of intense heat, but while no longer an enemy, Sunfire departed after retrieving the original X-Men (although decades later he headed Marvel's Japanese superhero team in Sunfire and Big Hero 6).

Most of the new characters had largely been designed by artist Dave Cockrum, some having languished in his sketchbooks for years. *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 was followed by a revival of the ongoing X-Men comic book, but Len Wein, who plotted the return of the X-Men (after some brainstorming by editor Roy Thomas), turned over the writing of subsequent stories to his editorial assistant, Chris Claremont. An aspiring actor, Claremont never made the stage, but in the manner of many of his characters, discovered an undreamed of talent. He delivered solid soap opera interaction, intriguing plots, and compelling new characters. Credit is due Claremont for transforming the X-Men from also-rans to headliners. In the process, he can be further credited for finally propelling female superheroes beyond Decoration Girl and Sidekick Lass. Claremont's refrain "Is there any reason this character can't be a woman?" would pass into editorial legend and he was, additionally, very quick to latch onto the success of *Star Wars* and introduce elements of space opera to *X-Men*. Although uncredited, artist Cockrum and especially his successor John Byrne each contributed ideas, and it was during Byrne's thirty-five issues that the X-Men's inexorable rise to their current stature as marketing monoliths really began.

Except for Cyclops, Xavier's original students departed the team in the new series, although Jean Grey soon returned in the new costumed persona that Claremont and Cockrum gave her: Phoenix, wielding vastly greater psionic powers over matter and energy. One of Claremont and Byrne's two greatest storylines in *Uncanny X-Men* (as the series was now called) was the "Dark Phoenix Saga" in issues 129 through 138 (1980), in which Jean was driven insane and became the Dark Phoenix, a menace to the entire universe. Ultimately, Jean reverted to her true personality long enough to commit suicide rather than pose any further danger. Years later Jean turned up alive and she and Scott would finally be married in *X-Men* (second series) #30 (March 1994).

Of the new characters it was Wolverine who quickly became the favorite, known only by his code name or "Logan." Cynics might claim that comics fans share an affinity with a man cast as a surly, repressed loner, and Wolverine lived out their fantasies by dealing with any trouble that came his way in particularly savage fashion. Much discussion ensued as to whether or not he'd murdered a guard off-panel in one Claremont/Byrne issue, but he certainly revealed little remorse regarding killing. An aura of mystery surrounded him. It took decades for Marvel to reveal his background, all the while establishing facets, then later revealing the snippets false. His mutant abilities are three-fold: a set of bony claws embedded in each hand, heightened senses, and a body capable of rapidly healing the most severe injuries. This ability has also restrained the natural aging process (Wolverine having been born in the nineteenth century). Wolverine had unwillingly been subjected to covert, CIA-sponsored "Weapon X" experiments. His skeleton and claws were bonded with an indestructible metal known as adamantium, and he was implanted with false memories, which, over time, have been established as such.

In issue 129 (January 1980) Byrne and Claremont introduced the thirteen-year-old Kitty Pryde, able to pass through solid surfaces and walk on air; she helped to restore the idea of youngsters being trained in the best use of their abilities. She played a pivotal role in the Claremont/Byrne team's other greatest storyline, "Days of Future Past" (issues #141–#142, 1981), set in a future where mutants were either murdered or interned in concentration camps. To prevent this scenario, the adult Pryde exchanged minds with her teenage counterpart, guiding the X-Men to manipulate pivotal events to ensure her future never occurred.

While sales, even under Byrne, initially failed to match fan fervor, they did increase to the point that Marvel introduced a second X-Men title, in all but name, with *New Mutants* reaffirming Professor X's program of educating young mutants. This was followed by *X-Factor,* in which Jean Grey returned and the original X-Men operated a mutant rescue operation under the pretense of dealing with the mutant "problem." The principal X-Men team also continued to expand, adding Rogue, unable to touch anyone without absorbing their abilities and memories. Through her encounter with a heroine named Ms. Marvel, Rogue gained invulnerability, super strength, and flight, powers which lasted for years. The distinctively southern Rogue long had a deep affection for her fellow southerner, the Louisiana-born Remy LeBeau. As Gambit he charges inanimate objects with energy and throws them to detonate on impact. His has a checkered past, having a long career as a thief

Over the years many other heroes joined the X-Men for brief periods. Created in the 1970s to tie in with the disco phenomenon, the Dazzler can transmute sound into light, including holographic images, and started her career on roller skates. She even starred in her own comic series. She eventually married temporary X-Man Longshot, an other-dimensional human able to manipulate luck in his favor. Forge is a genius-level inventor with vague shamanic abilities. Two less successful characters are Maggot, who housed two mutant slugs within his stomach from whom he could absorb energy, and Marrow, who threw razor-sharp bones she removed from her body. Another long-time member is Psylocke (sister of Captain Britain) who has powerful psychic abilities; Joseph, was once believed to be an amnesiac Magneto, but was actually a clone with magnetic manipulation abilities

Claremont has set the record for writing the X-Men, having continuously worked on the series from 1975 to 1991. Noted *Uncanny X-Men* artists during Claremont's long run include Paul Smith, John Romita, Jr., Marc Silvestri, and Jim Lee. In 1991, Marvel launched a companion series to *Uncanny,* simply titled *X-Men,* written by Claremont and drawn by Lee. The first issue was Marvel's best-selling comic ever, although many were sold to investors (possibly still stunned that the issues they stockpiled are commonplace). However, Claremont finally left both *X-Men* titles after issue #3 of the new series. Although Lee departed for greener pastures soon after, in collaboration with Whilce Portacio he made one lasting contribution to the comic by introducing Bishop, a mutant from the future able to absorb any energy directed at him and return it as force blasts. He grew up idolizing the X-Men, and arrived in the present by accident, aware one of his heroes would betray the team, but not knowing who. It was eventually revealed to be the unlikeliest suspect of all: Professor X.

Having long appealed to the X-Men's arch-foe Magneto to reconsider his ways, Professor X used his powers to close down Magneto's mind, at which point the fury so much a part of Magneto's character was transferred to Xavier. Awakening Xavier's own successfully repressed hostilities a new consciousness, known as Onslaught, formed within Xavier's mind, taking control with devastating consequences. Only the united force of all Marvel's non-mutant heroes shut down Onslaught. Unfortunately Xavier was later once again possessed, this time by the malign intelligence of his heretofore unknown sister, Cassandra Nova. While posing as an authority on mutant affairs, Xavier had always guarded the truth of the X-Men, but under Nova's control he revealed the truth to the world at large. Being forced to go public, though, has proved a blessing in disguise. It's enabled Xavier to use his vast personal wealth to set up global branches of X-Corporation throughout the world. Providing a staff position to almost every benign mutant who's had an involvement with the X-Men or affiliated groups; their goal is to offer shelter and aid to mutants in peril.

This storyline was conceived by Grant Morrison, who as the writer of the newer *X-Men* comic (retitled *New X-Men,*) since 2002, has stuffed a wealth of intelligent and radical ideas into the X-Men's world. Morrison's interpretations of familiar cast members offer new insights, and, on occasion, his plots have been matched by top-quality artists. Among the best of them is Frank Quitely, whose fine-lined delicacy and well judged poses combine for an extraordinarily expressive style. During his stint as lead *X-Men* writer, Morrison vastly expanded the size of Xavier's student body at his school, now known as the Xavier Institute. In Morrison's stories, more clearly than ever before, mutants represented a minority group striving for civil rights. With the "outing" of Xavier as a mutant, the X-Men were no longer hiding behind secret identities, but were openly campaigning for mutant rights.

As the X-Men franchise has continued to expand, more titles have been added, and the most successful has been *Ultimate X-Men,* depicting an alternate version of the saga of the X-Men, that Marvel kicked off in the new millennium. Under writer Mark Millar, and pencil artists Andy and Adam Kubert, the comic began with the founding of the team, mixing in the cast from various eras of X Men, and has since adroitly reworked themes of mutant isolation.

X-titles continue to proliferate like mutant genes, with a publication history that has as many twists as the ongoing super-soap opera's plots; in spring of 2004 the "X-Men: ReLoad" event brought a raft of new or retooled series in the franchise, including a return (though not the first) of Claremont to writing *Uncanny X-Men,* and a new *Astonishing X-Men* series, by artist John Cassaday and writer Joss Whedon, creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.*

Claremont co-created a series about a new *X-Men* spinoff team, *X-Treme X-Men* (2001–2004), featuring favorites like Storm and Rogue, This was followed, in 2009, by *X-Men Forever,* in which Claremont presented an alternate history of the X-Men, as it would have gone had he not left the series in 1991.

Two other series, *X-Men: The Hidden Years* (1999–2001), written and drawn by John Byrne, and *X-Men: First Class,* originated in 2006 by writer Jeff Parker and artist Roger Cruz, present untold stories of the original team of X-Men. The Xavier Institute mansion in New York State's Westchester County has been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt over the years. But in *Uncanny X-Men* #500 (September 2008), the X-Men, led by Cyclops, established a new headquarters in San Francisco. There they founded Utopia, an island that serves as a haven where mutants and nonmutant humans can live together in peace, as Charles Xavier has long hoped.

Among new characters added to the X-Men in recent years is Pixie, who has insect-like wings, can induce hallucinations, and can perform magic. (She is not to be confused with the eternal named Pixie, who was introduced in 2000 in Roger Stern and John Byrne's *Marvel: The Lost Generation,* the saga of Marvel universe heroes between the 1940s and the debut of the Fantastic Four.) Another is Hope Summers, the "Mutant Messiah," the first mutant to be born after the Scarlet Witch eliminated the superpowers of most of Earth's mutants, and who was raised in the future by a former member of the X-Men, the mutant warrior Cable.

Considering that the first *X-Men* series was canceled for low sales, it is extraordinary that *X-Men* has spawned so many successful series, miniseries, and companion series in the comics medium, as well as animated television shows and blockbuster live-action motion pictures, including *X Men* (2000); *X2: X-Men United* (2003); *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006); and *X-Men First Class* (2011). The ongoing sagas of the X-Men have become an entire fictional universe within the Marvel universe. *—FP & PS*

X-Men: Excalibur

A forerunner to the current manifestation of internationally linked groups of X-Men, the hero team Excalibur stemmed, in no small part, from the work of writer and artist Alan Davis on the U.K. comic book *Captain Britain.* Continuing from the work of Alan Moore, Davis applied a distinctly British sensibility to the trappings of American superhero comics for an engaging strip starring a character originally conceived as little more than a composite of nationalistic clichés.

Davis dispensed with Captain Britain's pseudo-mystical origin. Instead, he established that the Captain's alter ego Brian Braddock's abilities were a genetic inheritance from his father, a refugee from an other-dimensional world, unimaginatively referred to as "Otherworld." Braddock's lover, Meggan, was initially shrouded in mystery, and never given a surname. She often modified her appearance, and was eventually revealed as a shapeshifter, who instinctively assumed forms offering her protection, whether this be from the elements or from her emotions. Although critically acclaimed, lack of finance ended the *Captain Britain* strip in the United Kingdom, but it had an old friend across the Atlantic in its co-creator, writer Chris Claremont, who had featured Captain Britain in American *X-Men* strips. Significantly, he also used Braddock's twin sister Betsy in *X-Men* titles, as the powerful psychic Psylocke.

Excalibur was formed when, believing their X-Men teammates to have been slain, then underused X-Men Nightcrawler, Phoenix, and Shadowcat decided to start afresh by decamping to the United Kingdom, where they became embroiled with Captain Britain and Meggan. The German Nightcrawler had been an early mainstay of the revived 1970s X-Men. His generally jocular personality belies his demonic appearance, complete with forked feet and long tail, essential for the highly developed athletic maneuvers his slight form is capable of. The distinctive sulphurous smell that accompanies his teleporting accentuates his demonic ties, although editors, ironically, established that Kurt Wagner is a staunch Catholic who has considered taking vows of priesthood. A further ability to become invisible in shadow has been largely sidelined, and it took more than twenty years to establish that Nightcrawler's mother is the similarly blue-skinned shapeshifter, the villainous Mystique.

The Phoenix of this team was not the original X-Men's Jean Grey, but rather Rachel Summers, who arrived from the future in one of the time paradoxes common to X-Men continuity. She was the daughter of X-Men Grey and Scott Summers, from a bleak mid-twenty-first century where mutants were hunted, and either murdered or confined in concentration camps. Inheriting her mother's mental abilities hadn't prevented Rachel's capture by a mutant-hunter named Ahab, who tattooed her face, permanently identifying her as one of his mutant-hunting "hounds." It wasn't until she escaped to the 1980s that she discovered she could tap into the limitless abilities of the Phoenix Force, which she was able to use to obscure her facial tattoos.

When introduced, Kitty Pryde was the youngest member of the X-Men, only of college age in present-day Marvel Comics continuity, almost twenty five years after her introduction as a thirteen-year-old who could walk through walls. Characterization appropriate to her age was adroitly handled by Claremont (despite bruising encounters with the vicious aliens the Brood) and she regularly changed her code name, switching from Ariel to Sprite, before settling on Shadowcat. Precociously intelligent, she has a technological affinity, and honed her original abilities by learning how to partially solidify within machinery to disrupt it, and walking on air. Her acquisition of a miniature alien dragon she named Lockheed further established a unique identity.

The team name evoked Captain Britain's discarded Arthurian origin, but also evoked connections with X-Men titles. Excalibur based themselves at an offshore lighthouse, and the eccentricity of their headquarters was mirrored in the foes they faced. The Crazy Gang were lunatic and dangerous versions of Lewis Carroll's playing card characters from *Alice in Wonderland*, while Arcade constructed elaborate death-traps based on pinball machines and other arcade games. Holy echoes of the 1960s camp *Batman* television show! More threatening was Saturnyne, an other-dimensional conqueror, with a close resemblance to Brian Braddock's previous girlfriend Courtney Ross, whom she masqueraded as. Most dangerous of all was Jamie Braddock, brother to Brian and Betsy. His ability to warp reality drove him mad, but he was no less formidable for that.

A notable early adventure was sparked by a fragment of sentient alien technology christened Widget by Pryde. It activated interdimensional and trans-temporal gateways that sent Excalibur on a prolonged tour of space, time, and other dimensions. Humor was a significant aspect of the comic, and significantly weaker after Davis departed in 1989, indicating his plotting input. A pastiche of Ronald Searle's riotous public schoolgirls, from his *St. Trinians* cartoons, was a brief attempt at restoring the humor that only fully returned with Davis' appointment as sole writer and artist in 1991.

The prolific Davis introduced several new characters. Kylun the Barbarian was a British schoolboy transported through Widget to a barbarous world where he grew into an accomplished fighter, although his mutant power to reproduce any sound precisely is hardly an essential combat trait. Cerise was, in effect, an alien recruitment agent for the Shi'ar Empire. Her escape from an overzealous commander brought her to Earth, where an ability to generate malleable energy fields came in useful. Feron was a teenage mystic, raised from birth to host the Phoenix Force, and when it passed him by his arrogance became a source of friction within the team. Even Widget finally achieved the fully functional artificial life form he'd been building toward since arriving on Earth, as a sentient robotic time-portal.

Davis also incorporated characters from his *Captain Britain* days. Inept alien mercenaries, Technet, turned up for a period as Excalibur's tenants, resulting in slapstick disaster, and police inspector Dai Thomas was a hostile official presence. A recurring plot device, also inherited from *Captain Britain,* was the existence of thousands of extradimensional Earths, each with a counterpart of Captain Britain. On one alternate world the Nazis had won World War II, resulting in a Hauptmann Englande. Other simulacrums included a pith-helmeted Victorian, a hippy, and a reptile! Particularly prone to interfering in the affairs of Captain Britain was Roma, the imperial guardian of Otherworld. While benign, she isn't above indulging in manipulation to produce results her innate sorcery can't affect directly.

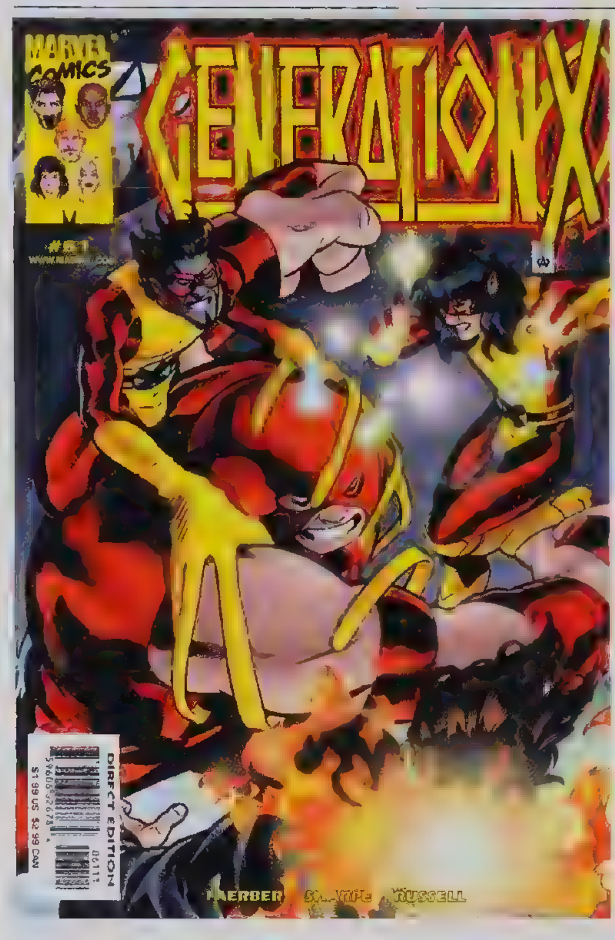
Post-Davis, *Excalibur* comics entered a protracted five-year decline to cancellation. Davis' creations were largely ignored or completely forgotten, and the characters introduced to replace them were largely cast-offs from other books. Writers transferred the Russian Colossus from the X-Men (long revealed as not dead after all), adding raw power to the team in his organic metal form. Piotr Rasputin was a gentle giant, the object of a teenage crush for Pryde, and an artist as well as a fighter. He would later sacrifice his life to spread the cure for the Legacy Virus. This virus affected only mutants, lying dormant before activating with fatal consequences, and one victim had been Piotr's sister Ilyana. Former secret service agent Pete Wisdom was a far more cynical and manipulative type than Scottish agent Alistaire Stuart, who'd previously accompanied the team. The chain-smoking Wisdom could fire off "knives" of burning energy from his fingers, and had a sordidly unhealthy passion for the extremely young Pryde, who welcomed his advances. Also incoming, from New Mutants, was British native Rahne Sinclair, alias Wolfsbane.

Making way for the new characters was Phoenix, who was shuffled off into the timestream, where she landed in another alternative future and helped to raise X-Force leader Nathan Summers. Here she called herself Mother Askani, and eventually died at a ripe old age. Death, however, has rarely proved a hindrance to Marvel superheroes, and time paradoxes have enabled her to make subsequent appearance in various incarnations.

Excalibur's last writer was Ben Raab, who was considerate enough to end the comic, in 1998, by revealing the whereabouts of all cast members forgotten by interim scripters, and to give the audience what they wanted by featuring the wedding of Meggan to Brian Braddock in the final issue. —*FP*

X-Men: Generation X

The term Generation X, made famous by author Douglas Coupland in his book of the same name, defined an entire generation in the mid-1990s. A shorthand label that acquired pop culture ubiquity, "Gen-X" applied to, in Coupland's words, that twenty-something "category of people who wanted to hop off the merry-go-round of sta-



Generation X #61 © 2000 Marvel Comics. (Cover art by Terry Dodson.)

tus, money, and social climbing that so often frames modern existence." Often referred to by commentators as "slackers" and "the generation without a name," this core demographic of forty-seven million was ripe for catering to, lampooning, and generally just trying to figure out. The comic book industry was one that attempted to meet this burgeoning market, and in 1994, Marvel Comics began publishing *Generation X*. With a readymade title of high recognition, that dovetailed neatly with its growing line of *X-Men*–related comics, Marvel soon found an audience for this groundbreaking book.

Generation X reworked a theme established in the earliest days of *X-Men*, that of mutants being schooled in the use of their abilities. Unlike previous attempts at a school environment for mutants, though, this title had a brazen contemporary perspective. Co-creator Scott Lobdell had honed his writing skills submitting gag material to *The Tonight Show*, and produced snappy dialogue for convincing teenagers, while initial pencil artist Chris Bachalo combined appealing character designs with dynamic modern storytelling. His was a talent none of the succeeding pencilers could match.

Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters was based in the Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts, removed from the dangers of the X-Men's Westchester County, New York, headquarters, and the instructors were a decidedly odd couple. The urbane and sexually charged Emma Frost had used her powers of mental manipulation to move within high society, rising to the position of White Queen among the X-Men's foes the Hellfire Club, where she trained a group of villainous mutant teens, the Hellions. Their deaths caused her to re-evaluate her priorities and initiated her reform. The Irish Sean Cassidy concealed his mutant abilities as an NYPD officer, before briefly being forced to use his powers of flight and a deafening psionic scream in the pursuit of crime. As the Banshee, he is always a reluctant hero, preferring to romance genetic researcher Moira McTaggart, in contrast to his daughter Siryn, who inherited his abilities and grew to lead X-Force.

The students were a multicultural group. Asian American orphan Jubilation Lee (Jubilee) accompanied the X-Men and Wolverine before attending the school. Her pyrokinetic powers activated on encountering a mutant-hunting Sentinel, and her sassy and contrary attitude caused tension with Monacan Monet St. Croix, alias M, whose myriad abilities came with a superior social status and attitude. Invulnerable, strong, telepathic, and able to fly, the storyline eventually revealed that the Monet who joined the school was in fact a composite being formed from her two younger sisters, while the real Monet was held captive by their brother, Emplate, Generation X's first and most persistent foe. He siphoned mutant energy and expelled it in deadly fashion, trapping his sister in a silent form that functioned on instinct, not intellect. Emplate's initial encounter with Generation X permitted Monet to escape and join them, subsequently being named Penance. It was some while before writers revealed her true identity, and that the cost of regaining her body was trapping her sisters as Penance.

The final female member of Generation X was Paige Guthrie, from a small West Virginia mining community, who calls herself Husk. Her brother Sam Guthrie, Cannonball, had been a founding member of the New Mutants. The ambitious Paige accepted her mutant ability to shed skin to reveal different forms beneath. She became romantically linked with her teammate, the eccentrically spelled Jonothon Starsmore from England.

Chamber's force blasts first manifested with a burst that decimated his lower jaw and throat, an area he covered with a scarf. Able to communicate psionically, he grew from a self-pitying loner, who considered himself a freak, into short-lived status among the X-Men.

The African American Everett Thomas, codenamed Synch, could channel the abilities of any mutant within his vicinity. The team was rounded out by Latino Angelo Espinosa, known as Skin, who was raised in the barrio of East Los Angeles. As a teenager his skin became gray and pliable, and he was able to stretch it to considerable lengths, although no consideration was ever given to whether or not his muscles and skeleton also stretched, and if not what effects this might have upon him. Resident on the grounds of the Massachusetts academy was Gateway, an enigmatic silent aborigine able to open gates in the sky to other places.

Despite ostensibly being there for schooling, the youngsters were rapidly initiated into combat, although their encounters were as often as not prompted by relations between people at the school. While Emplate was their most persistent enemy, Emma Frost's two sisters proved every bit as manipulative and scheming as she. The younger, Cordelia, attempted to acquire Emma's former position as White Queen of the Hellfire Club, while the elder, Adrienne, was a deadlier proposition. Able to learn secrets from others merely by "reading" objects they'd handled, she offered necessary financial aid, but her true agenda was to see the school destroyed. Ironically, she succeeded, but not in the fashion she had intended. These weren't the only antagonists in the series: A human student at the school, Tristan Brawn, had a grandfather possessed of a talisman that surrounded him with an invulnerable force field, and who headed a criminal organization. Banshee's villainous cousin, Black Tom Cassidy, also appeared several times, and other foes familiar to X-Men readers included Juggernaut and Toad.

As the series progressed, there were additions to the cast. Firstly, the far younger Artie and Leech were relocated from X-Factor, under what might be seen as less than the legal requirement for adult supervision. Leech could dampen or siphon away the abilities of any mutant within a certain radius of him. The silent Artie previously lived among a mutant community in the New York sewers, and communicated via sonic "holograms," essentially projecting pictures. Writers sparingly used the pair, although they took a greater role in the spin-off miniseries *Daydreamers.* The other-dimensional, millennia-old Gaia was rescued by the team, hung around for a while, and abruptly departed, having spent more time acting thirteen-years-old than honing almost limitless powers. The Samoan Mondo was shuffled offstage permanently when he was murdered by the villain Bastion. A generally cheerful guy who could assume the qualities of anything he touched, he was rarely used during slightly more than a dozen issues with the team.

Generation X pushed Marvel's mutants into new territory by presenting a convincing cast with whom the perceived audience could identify. They were not the clean-cut compliant teenagers who had previously occupied Marvel titles, although they tended toward disobedience and mischief, rather than outright hostility. The blend was enough to make the comic an instant success in 1994, and the *Generation X* Fox TV movie was fast-tracked, screening in February 1996. While well produced, and generally well received by fans, budgetary restrictions necessitated Chamber, Husk, Penance, and Synch being discarded or replaced by substitutes whose powers weren't as costly to simulate for television. The plot centered on a "dream machine" created by Emma Frost (played by Finola Hughes) enabling telepathic manipulation. Frost had discarded the device, only for the students to rediscover it years later with troublesome consequences.

As the *Generation X* comic continued, the tone became considerably darker, with the abduction of children one topic spotlighted. Synch was killed by Adrienne Frost, and Emma subsequently murdered her sister, an act that left vast residual guilt. With Sean Cassidy also self-absorbed, mourning the death of Moira McTaggart, the students decided their education was suffering, and departed the school, at which point their comic was canceled. Cassidy was next seen heading a mutant militia called X-Corps, brought down in very final fashion by some X-Men villains. He's not been seen since. Emma Frost joined the core X-Men team, as Chamber, as did Husk, briefly. Chamber also starred in a 2002–2003 comics miniseries written by Brian K. Vaughan. Skin was killed by an anti-mutant hate group in 2003. Jubilee was one of the mutants whose superpowers were removed by the Scarlet Witch in the 2005 "Decimation" storyline. M went to work for X-Factor Investigations.

Generation X's theme of training teenage mutants resurfaced in the series *New X-Men: Academy X* (2004–2008), about the greatly expanded mutant student body at the Xavier Institute, where Cyclops and Emma Frost served as headmasters. Most of the students, however, lost their powers in the "Decimation." This *New X-Men* series was replaced, in 2008, by *Young X-Men*, written by Marc Guggenheim, which ended the fol lowing year. —*FP*

X-Men: New Mutants

The New Mutants were the first tentative step into expanding the X-Men franchise into the marketing behemoth it is today. The original 1960s premise of X-Men was that of a school where those with inherent superhuman abilities, or mutants as they were labeled, would hone their talents away from the public eye, for the eventual betterment of humankind. The X-Men, as relaunched in the 1970s, were a diverse multicultural group, and elements from both incarnations were combined in the New Mutants. They were drawn from the global population of mutants, but their youth and inexperience helped them stand apart from the X-Men, while their similar costumes doubled as school uniforms.

Writer Chris Claremont, then enjoying a sustained creative peak writing *X-Men*, created the cast in 1983. Artist Bob McLeod joined him, and the New Mutants were launched via the then experimental format of the graphic novel, only Marvel Comic's fourth to that point. While their title ran a respectable one hundred issues, none of the original New Mutants really caught the public imagination. The most popular has proved to be Cannonball, able to propel himself through the air with tremendous force, simultaneously becoming invulnerable. His powers manifested under extreme conditions when a cave-in trapped the young Sam Guthrie on his first day as a miner. His initial characterization was unsophisticated and awed, but nowhere near as reserved and awkward as Wolfsbane, essentially a mutant werewolf, who also assumes transitional forms between human and wolf. Her costume shreds during transformation, leading to embarrassing moments for the already shy Rahne Sinclair.

Confidence is no problem for Roberto DaCosta, alias Sunspot, scion of a wealthy Brazilian family, whose ability to draw energy from the sun provides prodigious strength and force blasts. The sometimes aloof Native American Dani Moonstar projects three-dimensional images drawn from the minds of others. As the series progressed, she also developed a bond with the Valkyries of Norse legend, from whom she inherited a winged horse named Brightwind, and learned to predict imminent death. She never settled on a permanent alias, being known as Psyche and Mirage as often as she was just by her surname. Xi'an Coy Manh was older than her teammates, a Vietnamese immigrant who thwarted her Uncle's aspirations to form a criminal empire via her ability to have others act under her control. As Karma her participation with the New Mutants was sporadic, as her priority was always the welfare of her younger brother and sister.

The initial team was expanded relatively quickly. Ilyana Rasputin is the sister of the X-Men's Colossus, a Russian farm girl and a sorceress known as Magik. She had been abducted by an other-dimensional demon named Belasco as a child and grew to puberty within his realm, but when she escaped back to Earth mere seconds had elapsed. Amara Aquilla was retrieved from what was seemingly the unspoiled Roman civilization, Nova Roma, secreted within the Amazonian jungle. As Magma she possesses assorted volcanic-related abilities, enabling her to cause small earth tremors and control lava.

The early adventures of the New Mutants were competent, but undistinguished, and it took the appointment of maverick artist Bill Sienkiewicz, in 1984, to provide a unique visual identity. In his artistic debut, the team confronted a demonic bear that Moonstar believed responsible for the disappearance of her parents. Then heavily influenced by the scratchy distortions of Ralph Steadman, among others, Sienkiewicz's bear was a sinister heaving mass. It transpired that the bear *was* Moonstar's parents, transformed by an ancient evil. Sienkiewicz also concocted the visual template for Warlock, an alien "techno-organic" life-form, memorably conveyed as a morphing parade of metallic components. At times, Warlock would form a protective suit around Doug Ramsey, whose ability to communicate with machinery as Cypher was ill-suited to combat, although his abilities enabled him to perceive reality as Warlock did when within his protective cocoon. Their relationship grew deeper, and each began to manifest the personality traits of the other, a fusion halted by Ramsey's death protecting Wolfsbane. Not comprehending the concept of death, Warlock unsuccessfully attempted to revive Ramsey's corpse. Years later, though, Doug was resurrected through means of a techno-organic virus.

In the tradition of the X-Men, although ostensibly studying, the New Mutants stumble into plenty of adventures. A recurring playground was Belasco's dimension of Limbo. Bearing many similarities to conventional depictions of hell, it's populated by assorted demons, many of whom have aspirations to control the realm. Members of the Hellfire Club provided recurring foes, the most prominent among which were the Hellions, mirror images of the New Mutants, being trained by the Hellfire Club's White Queen, Emma Frost, as future mutant enforcers for the Club. They were briefly joined by a group of New Mutants rebelling against the appointment of reformed villain Magneto as their teacher, but came to an untimely end at the hands of a mutant psychopath from the future.

Several mutants introduced in *X-Factor,* and briefly teamed as X-Terminators, later joined the New Mutants. Skids projects a body-encompassing force field, and was romantically entangled with Rusty Collins, who had heat-related powers, but rarely displayed them before his death at the hands of the Mutant Liberation Force. Rictor generates vibratory waves, while Boom Boom creates small parcels of detonating energy. Her later change of code name to Meltdown was well advised. She would develop a relationship with Cannonball. Youngsters Artie and Leech also tagged along before being forwarded to Generation X.

A much-needed boost in profile and popularity came with the appointment of Rob Liefeld, first as pencil artist, then as co-plotter, in 1990. Not very much older than some of the characters he drew, Liefeld brimmed with ideas and enthusiasm, and possessed a portfolio of superheroes he'd created since his earliest days reading comics. Foremost among these was Cable. A hulking brute of man, with muscles larger than most people's heads and guns the size of supermarkets, he was an imposing figure with cybernetic body parts and the odd robotic limb. His agenda, though, was not one of harmonious coexistence between mutants: he knew his enemies, and he planned to sort them out before they eliminated him.

The final days of the New Mutants saw the departure of all long-serving team members, with the exception of Cannonball and Boom Boom, as Liefeld introduced more new and extreme characters. One, Shatterstar, dealt with a man restraining him from behind by impaling them both on his own sword. With Cable's proactive policies and the new cast, little was left of the New Mutants, and their title was canceled in 1991, to pave the way for *X-Force.* This was the name of the team that the New Mutants had become under Cable's leadership.

After he was publicly revealed to be a mutant, Professor Charles Xavier greatly expanded the student body at his original school in New York State's Westchester County, now known as the Xavier institute. *The New Mutants* Vol. 2 (2003–2004), created by writers Nunzio Difilippis and Christina Weir, and artist Keron Grant, was about some of these new students, with Dani Moonstar and others from the original New Mutants appearing as instructors. This series was followed by *New X-Men: Academy X* (2004–2008), which also featured students at the Xavier institute and their teachers. In this series, Dani Moonstar was the instructor for a training squad named the "New Mutants," comprised of Elixir, Icarus, Prodigy, Surge, Wall Flower, Wind Dancer, and Wither.

The third *New Mutants* series, which began in 2009, and was initially written by Zeb Wells, has focused on members of the original New Mutants team, including Cannonball, Cypher, Karma, Magik, Magma, Sunspot, and Warlock. *—FP & PS*

X-Men: X-Factor

At a point when Professor Charles Xavier, founder of the mutant X-Men, had temporarily left Earth, the group's original members—Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Angel, Beast, and Iceman—decided to form a new team to carry on his work. The result was one of the first X-Men spinoffs, *X-Factor* #1 (February 1986), written by Bob Layton and penciled by Jackson "Butch" Guice.

Publicly, the original X-Factor was, purportedly, an organization of non-superpowered humans who hunted down and captured allegedly dangerous mutants. But this was merely the cover story that enabled X-Factor's founders, who were secretly the original X-Men, to find young mutants who needed their help, give them shelter, and train them on coping with their superhuman powers. The five founders also continued to operate as costumed superheroes, calling themselves the X-Terminators, and battling mutant menaces such as Apocalypse.

Layton and Guice soon left the series and were succeeded by writer Louise Simonson and her husband, artist Walter Simonson. Eventually the five founding members realized that their cover story was actually harming the mutant cause by spreading the notion that all mutants were dangerous. Hence, they publicly revealed the true purpose of X-Factor as an organization to help mutants. Eventually, Professor Xavier returned from his sojourn in outer space, and the five founding members of X-Factor returned to the X-Men.

Writer Peter David and artist Larry Stroman then revamped the *X-Factor* series, starting with issue 71 (October 1991). The new X-Factor was a team of superpowered mutant operatives working for the United States government. The original members of the new team were Havok (Alex Summers, Cyclops' brother), who could project energy blasts; Multiple Man (Jamie Madrox), who could create duplicates of himself; Polaris (Lorna Dane), who had magnetic powers; Quicksilver (Pietro Maximoff), who could move at superspeed; Strong Guy (Guido Carosella), who had superstrength; and Wolfsbane (Rahne Sinclair), who could transform into a wolf-like form. Other mutants joined later, including Forge, the Native American with a mutant talent for inventing. Two longtime X-Men enemies, the shapeshifter Mystique and the feral Sabretooth, were also forced to join the team.

The *X-Factor* series finally came to an end, and was replaced by *Mutant X* (1998–2001), a comic following Havok's exploits on a parallel Earth. Marvel also produced a short-lived television series about mutant heroes, also called *Mutant X* (2001–2004), which had no relation to the comic series.

In 2002, Marvel published a four-issue *X-Factor* miniseries (Vol. 2) about the U. S. government's Mutant Civil Rights Task Force, which had no connection to previous versions of X-Factor.

In 2005, Peter David revamped *X-Factor,* yet again, for the start of Volume 3 of the comics series. This time the series was about X-Factor Investigations, a detective agency founded and headed by Jamie Madrox, the Multiple Man. The original staff consisted of his colleagues from the second X-Factor, Strong Guy and Wolfsbane. Other mutants who have subsequently joined include M (Monet, from *Generation X*), Rictor (from *X-Force*),

James McAvoy (L) as Charles Xavier and Michael Fassbender as Magneto in 2011's *X-Men: First Class*. (20th Century Fox/Marvel / The Kobal Collection.)

Siryn, who inherited her father Banshee's sonic powers (from *X-Force*), Longshot, and Darwin (Armando Munoz), who can adapt to any environment (from *X-Men: Deadly Genesis*). —*PS*

X-Men: X-Force/X-Statix

When launched in 1991, *X-Force* was sold enclosed in a plastic bag containing a trading card featuring one of the team members, an additional premium cementing Marvel Comics' biggest new success in years. That it featured distorted artwork and scant plot, both courtesy of creator Rob Liefeld, seemed to matter little to the hundreds of thousands of buyers. Where Liefeld triumphed was with creative enthusiasm. He brimmed with ideas, many of them good, but many critics maintained that ineffective editorial channeling of his imagination produced confusing comics.

As much as Liefeld stamped his personality on *X-Force* from the beginning, so did his lead character, Cable. Introduced in *The New Mutants* #87 (November 1990) and co-created by Liefeld and writer Louise Simonson, Cable was an instant success. Direct and brutal, with enormous muscles and even bigger guns, Cable's mission was to prevent war between mutants and humankind. His is the type of convoluted origin, slowly released over a period of years, that seems inordinately popular with fans of Marvel's *X-Men*–related titles. Cable's given name is Nathan Summers, and he is the son of the X-Men's Cyclops and his first wife, Madelyne Pryor, a clone of his true love Jean Grey. Their offspring was infected with a "techno-organic virus" by X-Men foe Apocalypse. The only alternative to Nathan's death was to send him 2,000 years into the future, to a society torn asunder by war between humanity and mutants. While the virus transformed portions of his body into living metal, its spread was halted, and Summers was taught to channel his formidable telekinetic abilities. Additionally, he became the complete soldier.

When returned to the present day as an adult, Cable's self-appointed mission was to seek out and terminate anyone who threatened or persecuted mutants, thus intending to prevent the future he'd experienced. He initially believed this was best achieved leading a team, and so he took charge of the mutant team New Mutants, including Cannonball and Boom Boom, and added other members. Domino is a successful mercenary with the mutant ability to manipulate luck in her favor, while Feral is a more aggressive and violent version of the New Mutants' Wolfsbane, covered in fur and possessing an animal's heightened senses and speed. She has a mutually belligerent relationship with her sister Thornn, who is similarly gifted, and would eventually join the even more militant Mutant Liberation Front. The Native American James Proudstar blamed the X-Men for the death of his brother Thunderbird, and joined a group of villains-in-training under his brother's alias. In addition to flying, he performed every athletic feat at superhuman levels; eventually his anger dissipated, leading to a stint as Warpath in X-Force, before joining the X-Corporation. Shatterstar was genetically engineered as the perfect warrior, and has an agenda to destroy Mojo, an other-dimensional despot who creates action-driven television spectaculars as a means of controlling his population. Writers have dropped broad hints that Shatterstar is the son of two X-Men, Dazzler and Longshot, who have spent considerable time in Mojo's dimension. Thus Cable reorganized the New Mutants team into the strike force known as X-Force, which debuted in *The New Mutants* #100 (April 1991), and moved into their own *X-Force* series later that year.

The backstory Liefeld created for Cable provided plenty of foes. These included a cloned version of himself sent from the future to ensure mutants and humankind did fight (Stryfe); his evil son Tyler, also snatched from the future (but primarily seen in Cable's own comic); and assorted members of Cable's previous mercenary team, Six Pack, of which Domino was a member. In fact, the Domino who first joined X-Force was a shapeshifting imposter named Copycat, sent to infiltrate the team by Genesis, Tyler Summers; the real Domino joined X-Force later.

Cable left the team early on, and Liefeld soon after, and it would be years before any imagination was again applied to the characters. Cannonball, who had grown considerably from the awkward character introduced in New Mutants, assumed the team leadership, before temporarily ceding it to Siryn, also known as the Irish Theresa Cassidy. She is the daughter of X-Man Banshee, who believed her killed as an infant by a terrorist's bomb along with her mother. Inheriting her father's psionic powers, she was raised by his cousin Black Tom Cassidy, who used her as a pawn in his criminal plans. Later exonerated, she assumed a superhero career. Several of the New Mutants Rictor, Moonstar, and Sunspot returned to X-Force. Former member of Excalibur, Pete Wisdom, also led X-Force, reinforcing their credentials as a mutant strike force.

The comic coasted until the arrival of writer Peter Milligan and artist Michael Allred in 2001. They dispensed with the entire previous cast, along with the concept of a mutant militia, instead introducing new characters in a broadly based satire of media manipulation and the motivations of superheroes. This X-Force only shared the name with the previous team, and then only briefly as they were relaunched as X-Statix. These mutants were teen idols, responsible for generating masses of merchandising dollars via the televising of their carefully chosen missions, always for a hefty fee. The fatality rate was high, and the characters largely arrogant, mercenary, self-serving, and resolutely unpleasant.

The leadership of this in-fighting bunch fell to Guy Smith, code-named Orphan, a depressive who plays a nightly game of Russian roulette. The phrase "acute sensitivity" describes both his mutant ability and nature. He loved the teleporting U-Go Girl, who was an atypical heroine having given birth as a teenager, leaving her daughter to be raised by her mother while she pursued a career as a superhero; U-Go Girl was killed in combat. Anarchist, Tike Alicar, with the unlikely gift of toxic sweat, promotes the agenda of African American militancy, resenting the whitebread world, but quick to exploit any means of making money from it—to the extent of organizing a stadium tour to rake in some cash. He was joined in this by Dead Girl, who has a mysterious past, awakening in a graveyard after burial. She can "read" corpses for information and can rebuild her own body from any injury, continuing to animate severed limbs. Billy Bob Reilly posed as "trailer trash" to earn his place on the team, rightly considering it would render him more media-friendly than his actual middle-class upbringing (and an ability to bloat various parts of his body as Phat). He has also discovered his homosexuality, via liaisons with teammate Vivisector, a werewolf. The most mysterious member of the team is the alien Doop, resembling nothing so much as a flying potato with arms and eyes, who communicates via an alien language understood by very few.

X Statix continues the Milligan and Allred satire, adding Venus Dee Milo to the team, a female composed of pure energy who teleports and sends out energy blasts. Most previous members of X-Force now have positions within the global X-Corporation. In the final issue of *X-Statix* (#26, 2004) Milligan and Allred killed off the whole team. In Milligan's 2006 miniseries *X-Statix: Dead Girl Presents,* not only did Dead Girl return, but so did the spirits of Anarchist, the Orphan, and U-Go Girl; however, they all remained deceased.

X-Men leader Cyclops set up a new X-Force as a covert black ops team, and appointed Wolverine as its leader. This new team received its own series in *X-Force* Vol. 3 #1 (February 2008), written by Craig Kyle and Christopher Yost, and drawn by Clayton Crain. Besides Wolverine, its original roster included Warpath, Wolfsbane, and Wolverine's female clone X-23; the Angel, Domino, and Elixir (who can control the biology of himself and others) later joined. In 2010, this series was replaced by a new one, *Uncanny X-Force,* written by Rick Remember and drawn by Jerome Opena, with an initial line-up including Archangel (formerly the Angel), Deadpool, Fantomex (who is a human/machine hybrid), Psylocke, and Wolverine.

As for Cable, the founder of the first X-Force, he has starred in many comics series of his own, including his first ongoing series, which debuted in 1993. Cable was seemingly finally killed by the techno-organic virus in *X-Force* Vol. 3 #28 (September 2010). but it remains to be seen if his fate is permanent. *—FP & GM*

Young Justice

A junior version of the Justice League of America, DC's Young Justice was created by writer Todd DeZago and artist Todd Nauck, and debuted in *Young Justice: The Secret* #1 (June 1998). Most of the team's subsequent adventures in comics, however, were written by Peter David.

Young Justice's original core members were the present day Superboy (now also known as Kon-El or Conner Kent), the fourth Robin (Tim Drake), and Impulse (Bart Allen), all adolescents. Bart Allen, alias Impulse, was born in the thirteenth century C.E., and possesses the ability to move at superhuman speed. He is descended from both Barry Allen, the Silver Age Flash, and the latter's enemy, Professor Zoom, the Reverse-Flash.

Three teenage superheroines soon joined the team: the second Wonder Girl (Cassandra Sandsmark), the costumed archer Arrowette (Cissie King-Jones), and Secret (Greta Hayes), a dead girl who remained on the mortal plane, where she wielded various supernatural abilities, such as the power to become immaterial. Over time, other young superheroes joined the team. Eventually, however, Young Justice disbanded, and its members joined two other teams, the Teen Titans and the Outsiders.

In 2010, a *Young Justice* animated series debuted on Cartoon Network. Set on a parallel world, Earth-16, the animated *Young Justice* differs greatly from the original comics continuity, although it shares the basic premise of being a teenage version of the Justice League. Its original line-up includes Superboy (Kon-El/Conner Kent), the original Robin (Dick Grayson), Kid Flash (Wally West), a new version of Aqualad, and Miss Martian.

Created by writer Geoff Johns and artist Tony Daniel, Miss Martian (M'gann M'orzz, alias Megan Morse) debuted in *Teen Titans* Vol. 3 #37 (2006). In the comics she is a member of the White Martian race (as opposed to DC's Martian Manhunter, who is a Green Martian), although she usually uses her powers to appear green. She has the same powers as the Martian Manhunter. In the *Young Justice* animated series, she is not only a Green Martian, but is also the Martian Manhunter's niece.

Similarly, writer Allan Heinberg and artist Jim Cheung created Marvel's teenage version of the Avengers in *Young Avengers* #1 (April 2005). The Young Avengers was founded by Iron Lad, who proved to be a teenage version of the Avengers' archenemy, Kang the Conqueror, and left the team. Other members include a female version of Hawkeye (Kate Bishop), a costumed archer; Hulkling (Teddy Altman), a shapeshifter who is the son of Captain Mar-Vell of the alien Kree and Princess Anelle of the alien Skrulls; Patriot (Eli Bradley), the grandson of Isaiah Bradley, the "black Captain America" of World War II (from *The Truth*, 2003);

Speed (Tommy Shepherd), a super-speedster; Stature (Cassandra Lang, daughter of the second Ant-Man), who can change her size; Wiccan (Billy Kaplan), who has magical abilities; and the present version of the android Vision. Each of these young people is a counterpart to one of the adult Avengers, and Speed and Wiccan may actually be reincarnations of children of the Scarlet Witch.

Another unusual group of young superheroes debuted in Marvel's *Runaways* #1 (April 2003), created by writer Brian K. Vaughan and artist Adrian Alphona. They are teenagers who learn that their parents belong to the Pride, a criminal cabal. Discovering that they have extraordinary abilities, the Runaways literally run away and combat the Pride. Unlike conventional superheroes, the Runaways do not wear costumes. Vaughan was succeeded as series writer by Joss Whedon (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) and Terry Moore (*Strangers in Paradise*). —*PS*

Zatanna and Zatara

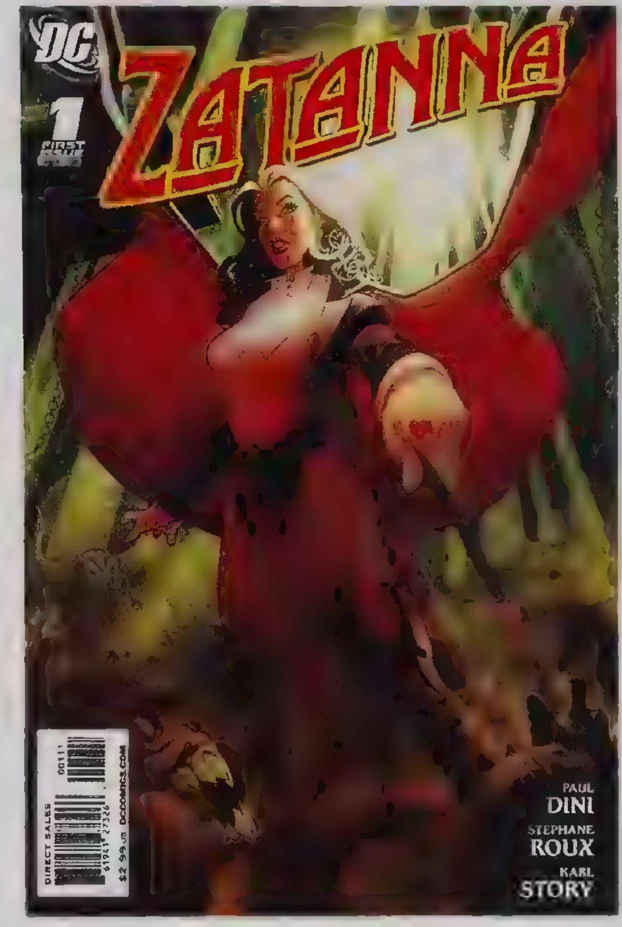
In the same comic book in which Superman first appeared, *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938), another long running DC Comics character, Zatara the Magician, made his debut.

Created by writer/artist Fred Guardineer, Zatara was clearly inspired by Mandrake the Magician, the costumed crime fighter created by Lee Falk (who also created the Phantom). Mandrake made his debut in his own newspaper comic strip on June 11, 1934. Like Mandrake, Zatara was a stage magician who wore the traditional costume of top hat and tails. Whereas Mandrake usually created illusions through hypnosis, Zatara had actual magical powers. What really made Zatara stand out, however, was his trademark method of casting spells by pronouncing words backward. Zatara was featured on a few *Action* covers before Superman was clearly established as the book's star, and Zatara continued to appear regularly in *Action* and *World's Finest,* through the 1940s.

Editor Julius Schwartz, writer Gardner Fox, and artist Murphy Anderson introduced Zatara's daughter, Zatanna, in *Hawkman* #4 (October–November 1964). The premise was that Zatara had mysteriously disappeared, and that Zatanna had embarked on a quest to find him. Like her father, Zatanna was a stage magician who had real magic powers, which she too utilized by speaking words backwards. She wore a sexy variation on her father's costume of top hat and tails, substituting fishnet stockings for her dad's trousers, making a memorable impression on the male readership. Zatanna's continuing quest led her to make guest appearances in *The Atom, Green Lantern* and the *Elongated Man* features, in *Detective Comics,* before she finally found her father in *Justice League of America* #51 (February 1967).

Later stories established that Zatara's full name was Giovanni (anglicized to John) Zatara, and that he had married Sindella, a member of *Homo magi,* a race of humanity with magical abilities; Zatanna Zatara is their daughter. After making various guest appearances with the team, Zatanna finally joined the Justice League in 1978. For a time she wore costumes that more closely fit the superhero mold, before resuming her iconic top hat and tails. More recently, Zatanna was a member of writer Grant Morrison's new version of the Seven Soldiers of Victory.

Zatara sacrificed his life to save Zatanna's in *Swamp Thing* #50 (July 1986), although his ghost has made subsequent appearances. Zatara's nephew, Zachary Zatara, who is Zatanna's cousin, also possesses magic powers and works as a stage magician as the new Zatara. He debuted in *Teen Titans* Vol. 3 #34 (May 2006) and was briefly a member of that team.



Zatanna #1 © 2010 DC Comics. (Cover art by Stephane Roux.)

Zatanna appeared in a 1993 episode of *Batman: The Animated Series*, which also featured Zatara in a flashback. Both this episode and the comics have established that he had taught the young Bruce Wayne to be an escape artist, and that Bruce and Zatanna have been friends since before he became Batman. Batman and Zatanna also teamed up in a 2004 episode of the *Justice League Unlimited* animated series, and in a 2010 episode of the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. All three episodes were written by Paul Dini, who has also guest starred Zatanna in *Batman* stories in *Detective Comics*, and wrote the 2010–2011 *Zatanna* comic book series, drawn by Stephane Roux. Zatanna had also appeared in episodes of the live action television series *Smallville*, in which she was portrayed by actress Serinda Swan. In September 2011, Zatanna became a member of the title team of the new series *Justice League Dark*. —*PS*

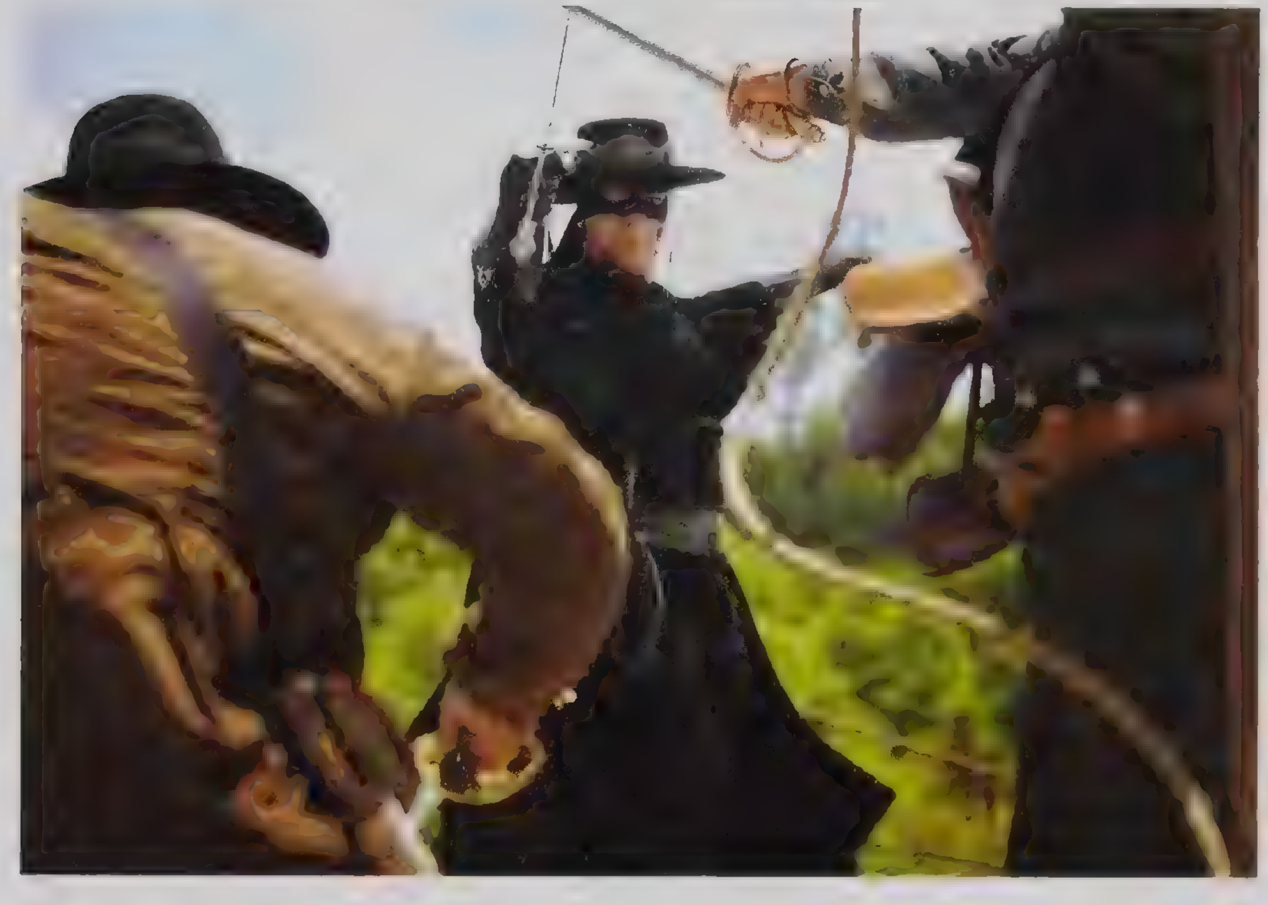
Zorro

In *Batman: Year One* (1987), writer Frank Miller reveals that on the night that Batman's parents were killed, they had taken their young son Bruce to see the film *The Mark of Zorro*. The implication is that Bruce Wayne modeled his Batman identity after his childhood hero, Zorro. Indeed, Batman's co-creator Bob Kane acknowledged Zorro as an influence on the creation of his character. Although Zorro really belongs to the swashbuckler genre, he is clearly a precursor of the modern superhero and worthy of discussion as an archetype influencer.

Zorro, whose name is Spanish for "The Fox," was created by writer Johnston McCulley in the serialized five-part story "The Curse of Capistrano," first published in the pulp magazine *All-Story Weekly*, beginning with Vol. 100 #2, on August 6, 1919. Zorro's true identity is Don Diego Vega (whose name was later changed to Don Diego de la Vega), a young nobleman who lived in Los Angeles, California, during the early nineteenth century when it was still under Spanish rule. Don Diego became the swordsman Zorro in order to defend the people of Los Angeles from political oppression.

In 1920, the first great action star in the movies, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., starred in a film adaptation of McCulley's story, titled *The Mark of Zorro*, which became a tremendous hit and an enduring classic. It was this film which established Zorro's iconic black costume, with the cape, gaucho hat, and mask concealing the top half of his face. As a result of the film's success, McCulley wrote over sixty more *Zorro* stories, starting in 1922; the last was published in 1959, a year after McCulley's death.

Like another forebear of the superhero, the Scarlet Pimpernel, Zorro (in the McCulley and Fairbanks versions) pretends in his secret identity as Don Diego to be a useless, indolent fop, foreshadowing the public personas of Clark Kent and Bruce Wayne. Like Batman, Zorro has an animal motif: the fox. Also like Batman, Zorro has a subterranean headquarters and a loyal servant. Fairbanks displays extraordinary athletic ability as



Antonio Banderas starred in the 2005 film *The Legend of Zorro*. (Columbia Pictures/Spyglass / The Kobal Collection / Cooper, Andrew.)

Zorro, like later superheroes such as Batman and Daredevil. Just as Batman uses his bat insignia as a symbol, Zorro famously uses the letter Z as his "mark," using his sword to carving it into the clothes—or sometimes the bodies—of his adversaries. Zorro is a master swordsman, known for his prowess at dueling. He is also a supreme horseman, usually shown riding a black steed.

Zorro has been a continual presence in American popular culture, in many different media, ever since his debut in 1919. Fairbanks returned to the role in a movie sequel, *Don Q, Son of Zorro* (1925). Among his most famous film appearances is the 1940 remake of *The Mark of Zorro,* starring Tyrone Power in the title role. In *The Mask of Zorro* (1998), Anthony Hopkins played the original Zorro, who trained Antonio Banderas's character to be his successor; Banderas returned in the title role of *The Legend of Zorro,* in 2005. Zorro's most celebrated television appearances were in Walt Disney's *Zorro* series, that ran from 1957 to 1959, and starred Guy Williams in the title role. The great cartoonist Alex Toth drew *Zorro* stories for Dell Comics in the 1950s and 1960s, based on the Disney version. More recently, writer Don McGregor has done *Zorro* stories for a newspaper comic strip, and for comic books for Topps, Dark Horse, and Papercutz. McGregor also co-created Zorro's costumed female ally, Lady Rawhide. Dynamite Entertainment launched a new *Zorro* comic book series in 2008.

Other superheroes who were evidently inspired by Zorro include DC's The Whip (who debuted in *Flash Comics* #1, January 1940) and El Diablo (from *All-Star Western* #2, October 1970), and Marvel's El Aguila (from *Power Man and Iron Fist* #58, August 1979). V in Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta* also owes a debt to Zorro, complete with using a letter of the alphabet as his symbol. The Hanna-Barbera studio memorably parodied Zorro by giving its animated character, Quick Draw McGraw, his costumed identity as El Kabong, who hits evildoers with his guitar. —*PS*

Resources

PERIODICALS AND FANZINES

Alter Ego. Published monthly by TwoMorrows Publishing, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, NC 27605. www.twomorrows.com

Back Issue. Published bimonthly by TwoMorrows Publishing, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, NC 27605. www.twomorrows.com

Comic Book Artist. Two-time winner of the Eisner Award. Published bimonthly by Top Shelf Productions, P.O. Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282. www.topshelfcomix.com

Comic Shop News. Published weekly by Comic Shop News, Inc. Available at comic-book shops or through Diamond Distributors, 1966 Greenspring Drive #300, Timonium, MD 21903. www.csnsider.com

The Comics Journal. Published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, Washington, 98115. www.tcj.com

International Journal of Comic Art. Published twice yearly by John A. Lent, 669 Ferne Blvd., Drexel Hill, PA 19026.

The Jack Kirby Collector. Published quarterly by TwoMorrows Publishing, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, NC 27605. www.twomorrows.com

Protoculture Addicts. Published monthly by Protoculture, P.O. Box 1433, Station B, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3B 3L2. www.protoculture-mag.com

Wizard: The Comics Magazine. Published monthly by Wizard Entertainment, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064. www.wizarduniverse.com

NONFICTION WORKS

Comic Book Academia and History

Benton, Mike. *The Comic Book in America: An Illustrated History*, 2nd edition. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1993.

———. *Masters of Imagination: The Comic Book Artists Hall of Fame*. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1994.

Braun, Saul. "Shazam! Here Comes Captain Relevant." In Ray B. Browne, ed., *Popular Culture and the Expanding Consciousness*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973.

Bridwell, E. Nelson. *Batman: From the Thirties to the Seventies*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1971.

———. *Superman: From the Thirties to the Seventies*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1971.

Buhle, Paul. *Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form*. New York: The New Press, 2008.

Coogan, Peter. "The Secret Origin of the Superhero: The Emergence of the Superhero Genre in America from Daniel Boone to Batman." Doctoral dissertation, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, American Studies Department, 2002.

———. *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre*. Austin, TX: Monkey Brain Books, 2006.

Daniels, Les. *Comix: A History of Comic Books in America*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1971.

DC Comics. *Fifty Who Made DC Great*. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1985.

Duin, Steve, and Mike Richardson. *Comics Between the Panels*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 1998.

Duncan, Randy, and Matthew J. Smith. *The Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture*. New York: Continuum, 2009.

Eury, Michael. *Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day at a Time*. Raleigh, NC: TwoMorrows, 2003.

Feiffer, Jules. *The Great Comic Book Heroes*. 1965. Reprint, Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, 2003.

Fingeroth, Danny. *Superman on the Couch* New York: Continuum, 2006.

———. *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero*. New York: Continuum, 2007.

Goulart, Ron. *Great History of Comic Books*. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1986.

———, ed. *The Encyclopedia of American Comics*. New York: Facts on File, 1990.

———. *Over 50 Years of American Comic Books*. Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, 1991.

Harvey, Robert C. *The Art of the Comic Book: An Aesthetic History*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996.

Horn, Maurice, ed. *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*. 7 vols. Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 1999.

Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book*. New York: Basic Books, 2004.

Knowles, Christopher. *Our Gods Wear Spandex: The Secret History of Comic Book Heroes*. San Francisco: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2007.

Kunzle, David. *The Early Comic Strip*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Lee, Stan, and George Mail. *Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee*. New York: Fireside, 2002.

Madrid, Mike. *The Supergirls: Fashion, Feminism, Fantasy, and the History of Comic Book Heroines*. Ashland, OR: Exterminating Angel Press, 2009.

Morris, Tom, and Matt Morris. *Superheroes and Philosophy*. Chicago: Open Court, 2005.

Nyberg, Amy Kiste. *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.

Overstreet, Robert M. *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, 42nd ed. Timonium, MD: Gemstone Publishing, Inc., 2012.

Reitberger, Reinhold, and Wolfgang Fuchs. *Comics: Anatomy of a Mass Medium*. Translated by Nadia Fowler. Boston: Little Brown, 1972.

Rhodes, Shirrel. *A Complete History of American Comic Books*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

Robbins, Trina, and Catherine Yronwode. *Women and the Comics*. Forestville, CA: Eclipse Books, 1985.

Rosenberg, Robin S., ed. *The Psychology of Superheroes: An Unauthorized Explanation*. Dallas, TX: Benbella Books, 2008.

Sanderson, Peter. *Marvel Universe*. New York: Harry Abrams, 1996.

Savage, William W., Jr. *Comic Books and America, 1945–1954*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.

Simon, Joe, and Jim Simon. *The Comic Book Makers*. New York: Crestwood Publications, 1990.

Steranko, James. *The Steranko History of Comics*. 2 vols. Reading, PA: Supergraphics, 1970, 1972.

Wertham, Frederic. *Seduction of the Innocent*. New York: Rinehart and Company, 1954.

Wiater, Staley, and Stephen R. Bissette. *Comic Book Rebels: Conversations with the Creators of the New Comics*. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1993.

Wright, Bradford. "The Vietnam War and Comic Books." In James S. Olson, ed., *The Vietnam War: Handbook of the Literature and Research*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

———. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Superhero Wit and Wisdom

Beatty, Scott. *Batman: The Ultimate Guide to the Dark Night*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2001.

———. *JLA: The Ultimate Guide to the Justice League of America*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2002.

———. *Superman: The Ultimate Guide to the Man of Steel*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2002.

Benton, Mike. *Superhero Comics of the Silver Age: The Illustrated History*. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991.

———. *Superhero Comics of the Golden Age: The Illustrated History*. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1992.

Bongco, Mila. *Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books*. New York: Garland, 2000.

Brooker, Will. *Batman Unmasked: Analyzing a Culture Icon*. London and New York: Continuum, 2000.

Brown, Jeffrey A. *Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Colon, Suzan. *Catwoman: The Life and Times of a Feline Fatale*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle, 2003.

Daniels, Les. *DC Comics: Sixty Years of the World's Favorite Comic Book Heroes*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1995.

———. *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics*. Special collector's edition. Introduction by Stan Lee. New York: Harry Abrams, 1995.

———. *Superman: The Complete History: The Life and Times of the Man of Steel*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1998.

———. *Batman: The Complete History: The Life and Times of the Dark Knight*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1999.

———. *Wonder Woman: The Life and Times of the Amazon Princess: The Complete History*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2000.

Eury, Michael. *Captain Action: The Original Super-Hero Action Figure*. Raleigh, NC: TwoMorrows, 2003.

Fleisher, Michael L. *The Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes:* Volume 1: *Batman*. New York: Macmillan, 1976.

———. *The Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes:* Volume 2: *Wonder Woman*. New York: Macmillan, 1976.

———. *The Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes:* Volume 3: *The Great Superman Book*. New York: Macmillan, 1978.

Isabella, Tony. *1000 Comic Books You Must Read*. Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 2009.

Jacobs, Will, and Gerard Jones. *The Comic Book Heroes: From the Silver Age to the Present*. New York: Crown, 1985.

Levitz, Paul. *75 Years of DC Comics: The Art of Modern Mythmaking*. Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 2010.

Robbins, Trina. *The Great Women Super Heroes*. Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press, 1996.

Saffel, Steve. *Spider-Man The Icon: The Life and Times of a Pop Culture Phenomenon*. London: Titan, 2007.

Sanderson, Peter. *Obsessed with Marvel*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010.

Simon, Joe, and Jack Kirby. *The Best of Simon and Kirby*. Edited by Steve Saffel. London: Titan, 2009.

DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMS

Comic Book Superheroes: Unmasked. Directed by Stephen Kroopnick. 100 min. Produced by Triage Entertainment for The History Channel, 2003. Documentary.

WEBSITES

AC Comics.
www.accomics.com

Archie Comics.
www.archiecomics.com

Comic Book Resources.
www.ComicBookResources.com

Comic Shop News.
www.csnsider.com

Dark Horse Comics.
www.darkhorse.com

DC Comics.
www.dccomics.com

Diamond Comics.
www.diamondcomics.com

Don Markstein's Toonpedia.
www.toonpedia.com

The Grand Comics Database Project.
www.comics.org

Lambiek Comiclopedia.
www.lambiek.net

Marvel Comics.
www.marvel.com

Silver Bullet Comic Books.
www.silverbulletcomicbooks.com

World Famous Comics.
www.worldfamouscomics.com

ORGANIZATIONS AND FAN CLUBS

The Comics Arts Conference is a conference designed to bring together comics scholars, practitioners, critics, and historians who wish to promote or engage in serious study of the medium, and to do so in a forum that includes the public. Affiliated with the Comic-Con International, the CAC homepage can be found at http://fac.hsu.edu/duncanr/cac_page.htm.

Photo Credits

All DC Comics characters, logos, and related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics, Inc.

All Marvel comic book characters and Marvel comic book material featured herein: ™ & © 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc. SUPER HERO is a co owned trademark. All such material is used with permission.

ASTRO BOY: TETSUWAN ATOM by Osamu Tezuka © 2012 by Tezuka Productions. All rights reserved. English translation rights arranged with Tezuka Productions.

ASTRO CITY © 2012 Juke Box Productions. All rights reserved.

DARK HORSE comics are published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc. Dark Horse Comics® & the Dark Horse logo are registered trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. GHOST, GO BOY 7, and THE MASK™ & © 2012 Dark Horse Comics, Inc.

DNAGENTS © 2012 Mark Evanier and Will Meugeniot.

GREEN HORNET: The Green Hornet is copyright © 2012 The Green Hornet, Inc. All rights reserved. The Green Hornet, Black Beauty, Kato, and the hornet logos are trademarks of The Green Hornet, Inc. www.thegreenhornet.com.

HELLBOY: Mike Mignola's Hellboy™ & © 2012 Mike Mignola. All rights reserved.

MADMAN: Text and illustration of Madman Comics © & ™ 2012 Michael Allred.

RISING STARS © 2012 J. Michael Straczynski and Top Cow Productions. Rising Stars™, its logo, and all related characters are ™ and © J. Michael Straczynski. All rights reserved.

THE ROCKETEER © 2012 Dave Stevens.

THE SAVAGE DRAGON © 2012 Erik Larsen.

SHADOWHAWK © 2012 Jim Valentino.

SPAWN © 2012 Todd McFarlane.

THE SPIRIT © 2012 Will Eisner. Reprinted cour tesy of Will Eisner Studios, Inc.

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS © & ™ 2012 John Carbonaro. All rights reserved.

Index

Note: (ill.) indicates photos and illustrations.

A

- Aarkus, 196, 284
- Abba and Dabba, 267
- ABC-TV, 324
- Abel, Jessica, 25
- Abnett, Dan, 37, 163, 177, 257, 302, 353
- Abomination, 180, 184, 361
- Abra Kadabra, 144, 359
- Abraham, Joe, 204
- Absorbing Man, 183, 361
- AC Comics, 137
- Acclaim Entertainment, 384
- Ace the Bat Hound, 50, 282
- Achille le Heel, 235
- Acrobat, 361
- Action Boy, 80
- *Action Comics,* 2, 8, 235, 329–30, 341, 346
- action figures, 14
- Action Girl, 343
- Action Heroes, 10
- Acuña, Daniel, 131 (ill.)
- Adam, Allen, 86
- Adam, Nathaniel, 88
- Adam (Buffy the Vampire Slayer character), 68
- Adam Strange, **21–22,** 206, 300
- adamantium, 394, 395
- Adams, Arthur, 27, 37, 76, 171
- Adams, Neal
    - Avengers, 39
    - Batman, 11, 51, 254
    - Deadman, 112
    - *Green Lantern/Green Arrow,* 12, 155 (ill.), 159–60
    - McFarlane, Todd, 305
    - *Ms. Mystic,* 15
    - Sienkiewicz, Bill, 242
    - Son-O'-God, 75
    - Superman, 349
    - X-Men, 404
- Adkins, Scott, 114
- Adult Swim, 79
- *Adventure Comics,* 61, 116, 117 (ill.), 155, 217, 306, 306 (ill.), 320, 352, 353
- *The Adventures of Captain America,* 82
- *The Adventures of Captain Marvel,* 93, 359
- *The Adventures of Sharkboy,* 18
- *The Adventures of Sock Monkey,* 76
- *The Adventures of Superman,* 217, 245, 328, 347 (ill.)
- *The Adventures of Superman* (radio show), 49, 346
- *The Adventures of Superman* (TV show), 7, 347, 359
- *Adventures of the Mask,* 231 (ill.), 233
- Aegena, 393
- Affleck, Ben, 108, 108 (ill.), 128
- African Americans, 12–13, 61, 160, 237–39, 245, 246, 248, 267–70
- Agent American, 140
- Agent Liberty, 356, 357
- Agents of Atlas, 230, 249, 285, 324
- *Agents of Law,* 111
- Aguirre-Sacasa, Roberto, 313
- Ahab, 408
- AIDS, 296
- A.I.M., 84
- Ainsworth, William Harrison, 381
- Airboy, 358
- Aja, David, 200
- Akerman, Malin, 390, 390 (ill.)
- Aladdin organization, 377
- Alanna, 21
- Alba, Jessica, 135 (ill.), 136
- Albert, Richard L., 225
- Albino Joe, 241
- *Albion,* 28
- Alcana, Sonia, 55
- Aleta, 162
- Alfred (Batman's butler), 47, 49, 50
- *Alias,* 270, 343
- Alias the Spider, 146
- Alicar, Tike, 416
- *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll), 408
- Alien Brat from Planet Byra, 300
- *Aliens,* 110
- Alizarin Crimson, 138
- *All Star Comics,* 170, 186, 187, 208, 209, 339
- Allah, 249
- *All-American Comics,* 143, 158, 284
- All American Publications, 208
- Allen, Barry, 7, 143, 144, 145, 419
- Allen, Bart, 419
- Allen, Crispus, 307
- Allen, Matt, 117
- Allen, Peggy, 338
- Allred, Laura, 223
- Allred, Mike, 76, 110, 223–25, 224 (ill.), 235, 287, 416, 417
- All-Star Squadron, 209–10, 283, 320
- All-Winners Squad, 195
- Alpha Flight, **22–24,** 249, 394
- *Alphas,* 19
- Alphona, Adrian, 420
- Alraune, Dr., 242
- Altar Boy, 34
- *Alter Ego,* 104
- alternative superheroes, **24–26**
- Altieri, Kevin, 152
- Altman, Teddy, 419
- Alvarez, Victor, 200, 248
- Alyn, Kirk, 347
- *Amazing Adventures,* 194, 342
- *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (Chabon), 112
- *Amazing Fantasy,* 307
- Amazing Spider-Man. See Spider-Man
- *Amazing Spider-Man* (movie), 18
- *The Amazing World of DC Comics,* 205
- Amazing-Man, 2, 210, 248
- Amazo, 205, 360
- Amazon Princess, 343
- Amazons, 397
- *The Ambiguously Gay Duo,* 79
- Ambush Bug, 75, 194
- American, 356, 357
- *The American,* 15
- American Avenger, 355
- American Crusader, 4, 354
- American Eagle, 4, 319, 355
- American Security Agency, 356
- America's Best Comics, 191, 393
- *America's Best Comics,* 63 (ill.)
- America's Best Comics heroes, **26–28,** 27 (ill.)
- Ames, Jonathan, 79
- *Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld,* 343

- Ammerperson, Connie, 44
- Amoeba Boys, 272
- Amok, 78
- Amora the Enchantress, 115
- Amorpho, 267
- Amphibian, 319
- Anarchist, 416, 417
- Anarky, 363
- *And Call My Killer ... Modok* (Rotsler), 202
- Anderson, Bill, 129 (ill.)
- Anderson, Brent, 24, 33, 40, 271
- Anderson, Mike, 45
- Anderson, Murphy, 35 (ill.), 80 (ill.), 143 (ill.), 170, 246, 306, 421
- Anderson, Pamela, 111, 334
- Andor, 374
- Andrew (Buffy the Vampire Slayer character), 69
- Andreyko, Mark, 226
- Andru, Ross, 14, 14 (ill.), 141, 233, 234, 309, 398
- Angel (Buffy the Vampire Slayer character), 68
- Angel (Golden Age), 3, 196, 321, 357
- *Angel* (TV show), 68, 70
- Angel (X-Men), 65, 115, 414, 417
- *Angel and the Ape,* 194
- Angela, 304
- Angle Grinder Man, 279
- Angle Man, 359
- Anglo, Mick, 239, 241
- *Animal Man,* 385
- animals. See funny animal heroes
- Anna (android), 151
- Annihilators, 302
- Annihilist, 118
- Annihilus, 360
- anti-heroes, 13, 15, 321
- Anti-Life Equation, 362
- Anti-Spawn, 304
- Antithesis, 365
- Ant-Man, 176, 178, 199, 269, 420
- Ant-Man and the Wasp, 28–30, 38, 39, 40
- Anya, 68
- Apache Chief, 207, 325, 326
- Aparo, Jim, 31, 99, 259, 262, 263, 306, 306 (ill.)
- Apocalypse, 363, 395, 414
- Apokolips, 251, 362
- Apollo, 36, 249, 393
- Aquababy, 31
- Aquagirl, 31, 365, 366
- Aqualad, 31, 80, 365, 419
- Aquaman, **30–32,** 30 (ill.)
  - Captain Action uniform, 80
  - cartoons, 332
  - enemies, 360
  - introduced, 3
  - Justice League of America, 8, 205, 206, 207
  - *Super Friends,* 324, 326
  - Superboy, 328
  - TV show, 10
- Aquarius, 57, 58
- Aquarus, 197
- Aquilla, Amara, 413
- Arabic languages, 249
- Arachne, 315
- Arachnid, 291
- Aragones, Sergio, 76, 319
- Arana, 315-16
- Arcade, 408
- Arcadia, 111
- Arcanna, 319
- Archangel, 417
- Archer, 358
- Archie Comics, 4, 10, 74, 76, 294
- Archie heroes, **32–33**
- Arcturians, 162
- Arcudi, John, 64, 123, 232
- Ares, 399, 401
- Argent, 367
- Argo, 330
- Ariel, 215, 408
- Arizona, 279
- Arkadin, Mikhail Denisovitch, 141–42
- Arkin, Alan, 77
- *Armageddon 2001,* 167–68
- Arnaud, Henry, 293
- Arno, Clive, 81
- Arnold, Everett “Busy,” 265, 266, 316, 318
- Arrow, 2, 63
- Arrowette, 419
- Arsenal, 260, 366, 367
- Artemis, 391, 401
- Arthur (Tick character), 75
- Artie, 413
- Artisan Entertainment, 275
- Asgard, 292, 370–73
- Asians, 246, 247, 249
- Asner, Edward, 253, 312–13
- Asrar, Mahmud, 331
- Assassin, 273
- Astin, John, 360
- Astra, 34
- Astro, Vance, 161–62, 163, 229, 253, 301
- *Astro Boy,* 284 (ill.), 285
- Astro City, **33–34,** 34 (ill.). See also *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*
- Astrovik, Vance, 161–62, 229, 253
- Athena, 27, 131
- Atherton, Matthew, 280
- Atlanta, 279
- Atlantis, 322, 323
- *Atlantis the Lost Empire,* 174
- Atlas Comics, 13, 322
- The Atom, 3, 8, **34–36,** 35 (ill.), 130, 142, 208, 249, 359–60, 367
- Atom Ant, 77, 148, 165, 331
- Atom Bomb, 378
- *Atom Man vs. Superman,* 359
- Atom Smasher, 210
- Atom the Cat, 147
- Atoma, 6, 340
- Atoman, 6
- *Atomic Betty,* 334
- Atomic Knight, 260
- Atomic Man, 6
- Atomic Mouse, 73, 98, 147
- Atomic Rabbit, 147
- Atomic Skull, 362
- Atomic Thunderbolt, 6
- Atomics, 190, 224
- Atrocitus, 161
- Attila the Hunter, 295
- Attilan, 195
- Attuma, 115, 323
- Aubrey, Roger, 64
- Aunt Harriet, 50
- Aurakles, 259
- Aurora, 22–23, 24
- Austen, Chuck, 40, 240
- Austin, Jeff, 139
- Austin, Terry, 271
- The Authority, **36–37,** 249, 265, 305, 393
- Autumn Mews, 317
- Avengelyne, 17, 128, 344
- Avenger, 332
- The Avengers, **37–41,** 38 (ill.)
  - Ant-Man and the Wasp, 29, 30
  - *Avengers Forever,* 186
  - *Avengers Spotlight,* 169
  - Black Knight, 60, 61
  - Black Panther, 62
  - Black Widow, 64
  - Captain America, 82, 356
  - Defenders, 114, 115
  - Hawkeye, 168, 169, 363
  - Hulk, 178
  - Marvel Girl, 341
  - movie, 18, 184
  - Ms. Marvel, 244
  - Power Pack, 271
  - Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, 277, 278, 363
  - Spider Woman, 314
  - Thor, 370
  - TV drama, 341–42
  - villains, 361
  - Wonder Man, 284
- Awesome Entertainment, 26, 140, 191
- Awkwardman, 74, 193
- Ayers, Dick, 60, 138, 153
- Aykroyd, Dan, 78
- Azaria, Hank, 76, 78
- Azrael, 53, 366
- Aztar, 306
- Aztek, 207
- Azzarello, Brian, 270, 402

B

- Ba, Gabriel, 112
- Bacall, Lauren, 317
- Bachalo, Chris, 410
- Backlash, 392
- “Bad Girl art,” 16–17
- Bad Samaritan, 259
- Bader, Diedrich, 53
- The Badger, **43–44**
- Badger, Mark, 228
- Badoon, 161, 162
- Bagge, Peter, 25
- Bagley, Mark, 40, 253, 363

Baikie, Jim, 27
Baily, Bernard, 305–6
Baker, Buddy, 385
Baker, Dylan, 313
Baker, Kyle, 25, 28, 85, 267
Baker, Matt, 5, 146, 146 (ill.), 340
Bakshi, Ralph, 77, 147, 331
Balder, 371
Baldwin, Alec, 295
Baldwin, Robbie, 254
Bale, Christian, 17, 53, 54, 54 (ill.)
Balent, Jim, 96
Balkan Brothers, 235
Ballantine, Roxanne, 55
Balloon Boy, 116
Balot, Stuffer, 317
Bana, Eric, 183
Bananaman, 333
Bandar, 261
Banderas, Antonio, 423, 423 (ill.)
Bane, 54, 363
Bang Babies, 237, 238
Bangs, Sophie, 28
Banks, Brenda, 338
Banks, Elizabeth, 312, 313
Banner, Bruce, 41, 178–84, 297
Banner, David, 183, 363
Banshee, 247, 405, 410, 411, 415, 416
Barb Wire, 16, 17, 111, 344
Barbeau, Adrienne, 96
Barbera, Joseph, 165, 166
Barbie, 80, 81
Bare, Al, 118
Barker, Clive, 290
Barks, Carl, 44
Barnacle Boy, 79, 334
Barnes, Bucky, 39, 41, 81, 82, 85–86, 196
Barnes, Trevor, 401
Barnett, Michael, 279
Baron, Mike, 15, 43, 110, 302
Baron Bedlam, 259
Baron Blitz, 334
Baron Blood, 196
Baron Buzz-Saw, 116
Baron Gestapo, 4, 358
Baron Mondo, 352
Baron Mordo, 361
Baron Zemo, 39, 82, 361
Baroness Blood, 340
Barr, Jim, 70, 71
Barr, Mike W., 199, 259, 269, 283, 377
Barreto, Eduardo, 228
Barrionuevo, Al, 227 (ill.)
Barry, Dan, 71, 387
Barry, Seymour, 262
Barrymore, Drew, 344
Bart Dog, the Canine Crusader, 45
Barta, Hilary, 27
Bartman, **44–46**, 76
Barton, Clint, 29, 168
Basinger, Kim, 53
Bassett, Angela, 364
Bastion, 411
Bat Boy and Rubin, 73
"Batboy and Rubin!," 24
Bates, Cary, 88, 144, 349
Batfink, 148, 331–32
Batgirl, 12, **46–47**, 46 (ill.), 52, 55–56, 186, 249, 341, 342, 343, 363. *See also* Bat-Girl
Bat-Girl, 50, 54, 282, 341, 365. *See also* Batgirl
Batman, **48–54**, 48 (ill.), 51 (ill.), 52 (ill.), 54 (ill.)
  action toy, 14
  alleged homosexuality, 341
  Batgirl, 46–47
  Batwoman, 54
  Burnley, Jack, 320
  Captain Action uniform, 80
  cartoons, 332, 333, 334
  Catwoman, 94–96
  Dr. Death, 357
  enemies, 359, 360, 363
  giant bees, 6
  Hellboy, 174
  introduced, 2
  Justice League of America, 8, 205, 206, 207
  lampooned in *Radioactive Man*, 45
  Lobo, 222
  Manhunter, 225
  Martian Manhunter, 227–28
  Metamorpho, 235
  Moon Knight, 242
  multiculturalism, 247
  new look, 8
  Nightwing, 254–56
  Outsiders, 259
  Phantom Stranger, 263, 264
  Ra's al Ghul, 362
  from relevance trend to gothic terrain, 12
  Robin the Boy Wonder, 3, 281–83
  role-playing video games, 337
  sells war bonds, 4
  Shadow, 295
  Spawn, 190, 304
  Strange, Hugo, 357
  Super Friends, 324
  Swamp Thing, 362
  on TV, 10
  V for Vendetta, 382
  villains' appearance, 358
  Zorro, 422, 423
Batman: Son of the Demon (Barr), 283
Batman: The Animated Series (TV show), 17, 18
Batman: The Brave and the Bold, 53–54
Batman: The Dark Knight Returns, 16
Batman: The Video Game, 337
Batman (Burton movie), 17, 53
Batman (TV show), 10, 50–51, 51 (ill.), 77, 95, 165, 259, 282
Batman & Robin, 256, 283
Batman Begins, 17
Batman Family, 48 (ill.)
Batman Forever, 256
Batman Returns, 95–96
Batman Role-Playing Game, 336
Bat-Mite, 50
Batroc the Leaper, 84
Bats-Man, 74
Batson, Billy, 91–94, 230
Battalion, 367
Battle of the Planets, 190
BattleStar, 279
Batwoman, 50, **54–55**, 249, 282, 341
Bavington, Tim, 45
Baymax, 285
Beagle, Alfred, 49
Beamish, Stanley, 77
Beard Hunter, 123
Beast, 40, 115, 403, 404, 414
Beast Boy, 365, 366, 367, 368
Beaubier, Jeanne-Marie, 22–23
Beaubier, Jean-Paul, 22–23
Beautie, 285
Beautiful Dreamer, 252
Beck, C. C., 5, 6, 34, 74, 91, 92, 92 (ill.), 93
Beckley, Stephen, 302
Beckum, Chuck, 240
Bedard, Tony, 67
Beehive, 301
Beetle, 308, 361
Bek, Garryn, 221
Belasco, 413
Belmont, Dian(e), 289, 290
Belova, Yelena, 65
Belushi, John, 78
Ben 10, 334–35
Bendis, Brian Michael, 25, 109, 243, 270, 311, 312
Bennet, Claire, 174
Bennett, Joe, 183, 368
Benson, Amber, 68
Benson, Gat, 305
Bent, Clark, 24
Benton, Bob, 63
Benton, Mike, 2, 251, 340
Benz, Julie, 18, 345
Beppo the Supermonkey, 348
Berger, Glen, 313
Berger, Karen, 384, 401
Berle, Milton, 360
Bernhardt, Arthur, 103, 104
Bernstein, Noah, 268
Bernstein, Robert, 104
Berry, Halle, 96, 96 (ill.), 342, 344
Bertinelli, Helena Rosa, 187
Bester, Alfred, 158, 320
Beta Ray Bill, 302, 371, 372
Betty (Archie Comics), 10
Beware the Creeper, 11
Beyond, Johnny, 25
Bianchi, Simone, 61, 319 (ill.)
Big Barda, 206, 251
Big Bear, 252
Big Ben, 362
Big Bertha, 40
Big Daddy, 280
Big Girl Adventures, 146 (ill.)

Big Hero 6, 249
Big Red Cheese, 92, 93
Big Head, 232
Binary, 244
Binder, Jack, 92, 103, 118, 230, 230 (ill.), 294
Binder, Otto, 34, 71, 74, 92, 118, 230
Bionic Six, 333
The Bionic Woman, 342
Birch, J. J., 141
Bird, Brad, 18, 191, 192, 285
Birdboy, 332, 398
Birdman, 332, 398
Birdman and the Galaxy Trio, 10, 166, 167, 332
Birds of Prey, 47, **55–56, 56 (ill.),** 168, 187, 344
Biro, Charles, 6 (ill.), 104
Birthday Bandit, 334
Bishop, 248, 406
Bishop, Kate, 169, 419
Bisley, Simon, 221
Bissette, Stephen, 25
Bixby, Bill, 183
Bizarre, Charity, 140
Bizarro, 325, 326, 328, 360
Bizarro Comics!, 77
Bizarros, 348
Black, Bill, 87, 137, 138, 337
Black, Marie, 78
Black Angel, 340
Black Arrow, 279
Black Beauty, 157, 158
Black Bison, 141
Black Bolt, 122, 194, 195
Black Bow, 317
Black Canary, 8, 47, 55, **56–58,** 57 (ill.), 156, 187, 206, 207, 208, 209, 211, 320, 339, 343, 399
The Black Cat, 3, **58–60,** 59 (ill.), 177, 339, 343
Black Condor, 145–46, 147
Black Cross, 109–10
Black Doom, 305
The Black Dossier, 216
Black Goliath, 29, 247
Black Hand, 159, 359
Black Hood, 3, 32, 33, 358
Black Knight (Avengers superhero), 40
Black Knight (Dane Whitman), 269
Black Knight (Heroes for Hire superhero), 176, 199
Black Knight (Iron Man villain), 200
Black Knight (King Arthur superhero), **60–61**
Black Lantern, 168
Black Leopard, 62
Black Lightning, 247, 259
Black Manta, 31, 325, 360, 363
Black Mask, 71
Black Monday Society, 279
Black Musketeers, 62
Black Orchid, 342, 385
Black Owl, 245
Black Panther, 10, 13, 40, **61–62,** 61 (ill.), 122, 134, 200, 246, 247, 267
Black Racer, 252
Black Ranger, 236
Black Rat, 71
Black Razors, 391
Black Samson, 197
Black Shroud, 138
Black Spider, 71
Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans (Brown), 239
Black Terror, 3, **62–64,** 63 (ill.), 105, 273
Black Toad, 81
Black Venus, 340
Black Vulcan, 325
Black Widow, 40, 41, **64–65,** 64 (ill.), 107, 168, 177, 196, 275, 340, 342, 361
Black Witch, 118
Blackbat, 47
Blackest Night, 31, 142
Blackfire, 366, 367
Blackhawk, 245, 316
Blackhawks, 245
Bladdo the Super Hypnotist, 267
Blade, 248, 353
Blair, Selma, 174
Blaisdell, Tex, 318
Blake, Adam, 300
Blake, Don, 370, 371, 372, 373
Blakeney, Sir Percy, 216
Blanc, Mel, 166
Blank, Buddy, 302
Blankman, 78
Blastaar, 194
Blastarr, 360
Blaze, Johnny, 153–55, 177
Blazing Skull, 196
Blimp, 74, 193
Blindside, 279
Blinky, 143
Blip, 117, 165
Bliss, 151
Blobetta, 117, 361
Blonde Phantom, 297, 340, 341
Blonsky, Emil, 180, 184
Blood, Jason, 353
The Blood Syndicate, 238, 238 (ill.)
Bloodshot, 16
Bloodstone, Elsa, 353–54
Blossom, 272, 334
Blucas, Marc, 68
Blue Beetle, 2, 10, 55, **65–67,** 66 (ill.), 87, 88, 98, 99, 206, 227, 248, 361
Blue Blade, 196
Blue Bolt, 3, 300
Blue Bullet, 196
Blue Bulleteer, 137, 139
Blue Diamond, 196
Blue Falcon, 78, 166, 167, 332
Blue Flame, 305
Blue Raja, 78
Blue Ranger, 236
Bluntman and Chronic, 76
Blur, 320
Bogdanove, Jon, 183, 248, 271
Bogdanove, Judith Kurzer, 271
Bogeyman, 271
Boiffard, Egon, 223
Bolland, Brian, 95 (ill.), 401
Bolt, 149
Boltie, 26
Boltinoff, Henry, 147, 234, 235
Bond, Campion, 215
Bond, James, 215, 216
bondage, 397
Bonehead, 333
Bongo Comics, 45, 76
Bono, 313
Booger, 224
Books of Magic, 264
Bookworm, 360
Boom Boom, 413, 416
BOOM! Studios, 17, 203, 204
Booster Gold, 67, 88, 206, 227
Booth, Brett, 368
Boreanaz, David, 68, 161
Bored to Death, 79
Borgnine, Ernest, 79
Boring, Wayne, 346
Borth, Al, 104
Boston Brand, 352
Bostwick, Jackson, 93
Bosworth, Kate, 351
Bottle City of Kandor, 348
Bouncing Boy, 217
Bowen, Tandy, 248
Bowler, 78, 110
Bowman, Rob, 128
Box, 23
Boy, 112
Boy Comics, 6 (ill.), 103, 104
Boy Commandoes, 225
Boyer, B. C., 126
Bozo the Robot, 285
Bozos, 115
Braddock, Betsy, 408
Braddock, Brian, 408, 409
Braddock, Jamie, 408
Bradley, Eli, 419
Bradley, Isaiah, 419
The Brady Kids, 324
Brain, 123
Brain Drain, 196
Brain Wave, 209
Brainex, 97
Brainiac, 221, 325, 348, 360
Brainiac 5, 217, 330
Brainwave, 210, 357
Brainwave Junior, 210
Brak, 165, 301, 361
Branagh, Kenneth, 373
Brand, Boston, 112
Brant, Betty, 312
Brass, Axel "Doc," 265
Brat Pack, 25
The Brave and the Bold, 50–51, 57 (ill.), 170, 170 (ill.), 234–35, 235 (ill.)
Brawn, Tristan, 411
Brecht, Bertolt, 216
Brendon, Nicholas, 67
Brent, Leander, 193
Brewster, Paige, 78

Breyfogle, Norm, 40
Bridges, Jeff, 203
Bridwell, E. Nelson, 193
Brigade, 190
Bright, Mark, 199, 269
Bright, Matthew, 281
Brightwind, 412
Brigman, June, 270, 271
Brimstone, 142
Brinkley, David, 24
Brittenholm, Trevor, 174
Brock, Eddie, 310
Broderick, Pat, 88, 141
Brodsky, Allyn, 162
Bromfield, Mary (Batson), 230
Bronze Age (1970-1980), **11–14**, 12 (ill.), 13 (ill.), 14 (ill.)
Bronze Tiger, 248
Brood, 244, 408
Brooks, Ham, 117
Broome, John, 143, 144, 159, 209
Brother Blood, 363, 366, 367
Brother Eye, 302
Brother Voodoo, 176, 248, 353
Brotherhood of Dada, 123, 386
Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, 39, 123, 277, 315, 341, 366, 404
Brothers Grimm, 314
Brown, Bob, 107, 123 (ill.), 268 (ill.)
Brown, Clancy, 161
Brown, Jeffrey, 25
Brown, Jeffrey A., 239
Brown, Len (character), 374
Brown, Len (writer), 374
Brown, Robert, 199
Brown, Stephanie, 283
Broxton, Oklahoma, 372
Brozowski, Joe, 141
Brubaker, Ed, 37, 85, 109, 200
Brunner, Frank, 121
Brutale, 363
Brute, 290, 295
Bryant, Al, 266
Bryce, Reno, 391
The B-Sides, 77
Bubbles, 272, 334
Buccellato, Brian, 145
Buccellato, Steve, 271
Buckingham, Mark, 240
Buckler, Rich, 39, 302
Bucky, 186, 355
Buddy, 355
Buffy the Vampire Slayer, **67–70**, 69 (ill.), 112, 344, 353, 354
Bug, 163
Bulk, 333
Bulletdog, 71
Bulleteer, 71, 211
Bulletgirl, 3, 71, 339, 357
Bulletman, 3, **70–71**, 90, 357, 358
Bullseye, 107, 108, 128, 362
Bumble, P. T., 317
Bumblebee, 365
Bumppo, Natty, 216
Bunyan, John, 215
Buono, Victor, 360
Burbank, 293
Burden, Bob, 75, 78, 110
Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense, 173
Burgos, Carl, 184, 185, 185 (ill.), 186
Burnett, Alan, 207
Burnley, Jack, 320
Burnout, 151
Burns, Martin, 228–29
Burton, Tim, 17, 52–53, 95–96, 343–44
Bury, Shon C., 272
Buscema, John, 38 (ill.), 39, 60, 119, 135, 177 (ill.), 284, 296, 298, 299 (ill.), 319, 323, 371
Buscema, Sal, 39, 114, 115, 132, 162, 199, 256, 313, 319
Busch, Adam, 69
Bushman, 242
Bushman, Ronald, 242
Busiek, Kurt
  Aquaman, 31
  Astro City, 33–34
  Avengers, 40
  Defenders, 116
  DePaul, Kirk, 226
  Eclipse, 126
  Iron Fist, 199
  Iron Man, 202
  Kirbyverse, 214
  Kurt Biesek's Astro City, 149, 190
  Power Man, 269
  Rocketeer, 287
  Shadow, 296
  Spider Man, 311
  Superfolks, 24
  Superman, 350
  Thunderbolts, 363
  Vision, 186
Buster Doe, 279
Butler, Yancy, 353
Buttercup, 272, 334
Byrd, Ralph, 387
Byrne, John
  Alpha Flight, 22, 23
  Avengers, 40
  Dark Horse, 110
  Doom Patrol, 123
  Fantastic Four, 136
  Hellboy, 172
  Hulk, 181, 182, 183
  Iron Fist, 198–99
  lampooned in *Radioactive Man*, 45
  Legion of Super-Heroes, 218–19
  multiculturalism, 249
  Power Man, 269
  Rog-2000, 285
  She-Hulk, 75, 297
  Spacegirl, 330
  Spider-Man, 311
  Sub-Mariner, 254, 323
  Wolverine, 394, 395, 396
  Wonder Woman, 401
  X-Men, 405–6, 407
Byth, 170

C

Cabera, Santiago, 175 (ill.)
Cable, 407, 413, 415–17
Cable & Deadpool, 114
Cadaver, Abner, 291
Cage, Danielle, 270
Cage, Luke, 41, 176, 199, 248, 267–70, 268 (ill.), 362
Cage, Nicolas, 155, 225, 269, 280, 345 (ill.)
Caiera, 183
Cain, 363
Cain, Cassandra, 47, 249
Cain, David, 47
Caine, Michael, 53, 54
Calame, Don, 377
Caleb, 70
Calendar, Jenny, 68
Calendar Man, 359
Calero, Dennis, 384
Caliban, 215
Camelon, 325
Cameron, James, 311–12
camp and comedy heroes, **73–80**
Campbell, Billy, 287
Campbell, J. Scott, 151, 190
Campbell, Martin, 161
Canada, 279
Candy, Etta, 397, 401
Caniff, Milton, 59
Cannon, Zander, 27
Cannonball, 411, 413, 414, 416
Cannon-Thunderbolt, Peter, 10
Canyon, Steve, 80
The Cape, 18
Capes, 77
Capital Comics, 15, 43–44
Capital Distributing Company, 98
Cap'n Hawk, 319
Capricorn, 138
Cap's Kooky Quartet, 363
Captain Action, **80–81**, 80 (ill.), 361
Captain Aero, 244
Captain Amazing, 110
Captain America, **81–86**, 83 (ill.), 85 (ill.)
  All-Winners Comics, 195, 196
  Avengers, 18, 38–39, 39, 40, 122, 337
  Captain Action uniform, 80
  communism, 355
  covers, 5
  encourages reading, 5
  enemies, 361
  Falcon, 247
  Ghost Rider, 154
  Golden Age, 9
  Guardians of the Galaxy, 162
  Hawkeye, 169
  Heroes Reborn, 140
  introduced, 4
  New Avengers, 41
  as one of big three Marvel heroes, 184, 186
  Red Skull, 358

  sidekick, 355
  superpatriot, 354
  on TV, 10
  Vietnam War, 356
Captain Atom, 10, **86–88,** 87 (ill.), 98, 99, 167, 206, 361
Captain Battle, 354
Captain Boomerang, 144, 359, 363
Captain Britain, 406, 407, 408
Captain California, 333
Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew, 75, 149
Captain Caveman and the Teen Angels, 166
Captain Cold, 144, 325, 359, 362, 363
Captain Comet, 300
Captain Commando, 355
Captain Courageous, 354
Captain Crandall, 334
Captain Fearless, 4
Captain Fight, 354
Captain Flag, 4, 354
Captain Flash, 77
Captain Freedom, 354
Captain Hero, 10, 199, 269
Captain Hurricane, 28
Captain Jackson, 279
Captain Klutz, 10, 74
Captain Marvel, **88–90,** 89 (ill.)
  artists, 5
  Bulletman, 71
  Dr. Sivana, 357
  Fantastic Four, 301
  introduced, 3
  Justice League of America, 206
  Mary Marvel, 231, 339
  Ms. Marvel, 243
  Noh-Varr, 229
  post-World War II, 6
  Silver Surfer, 299
  World War II, 4
Captain Marvel (M.F. Publications), 10
Captain Marvel Jr., 3, 5, 70, 71, **90–91,** 92, 230, 231, 358, 367
Captain Mar-Vell, 88–89, 163, 419
Captain Marvel/Shazam!, 13, 14, **91–94,** 92 (ill.)
Captain Midnight, 359
Captain Nazi, 4, 71, 90, 92, 358
Captain Nemo, 215, 216, 216 (ill.)
Captain Nice, 10, 77
Captain Nippon, 4, 90, 358
Captain Ozone, 279
Captain Paragon, 137
Captain Planet and the Planeteers, 166, 248, 333
Captain Prospect, 279
Captain Red Blazer, 355
Captain Swastika, 4, 358
Captain Swift, 193
Captain USA, 356
Captain Valor, 204
Captain Victory, 4, 15, 213–14
Captain Whammy, 331
Captain Wonder, 196
Capullo, Greg, 303 (ill.)
Cardy, Nick, 30 (ill.), 31, 218 (ill.), 327 (ill.), 365, 366 (ill.)
Carell, Steve, 79, 80
Carey, Dan, 241
Carnacki, Thomas, 216
Carnage, 363
Carnes, Ryan, 263
Carosella, Guido, 414
Carpenter, Charisma, 67
Carpenter, Julia, 315
Carr, Snapper, 246
Carrey, Jim, 111, 232, 232 (ill.), 363
Carrier, 36
Carrion, 363
Carroll, Lewis, 408
Carter, Jack, 265
Carter, Lynda, 79, 342–43, 399, 400 (ill.)
Carter, Sharon, 84, 85
Cartoon Action Hour, 337
Cary, Detective, 241
Casanova Frankenstein, 78
Case, Lenore, 157
Caseneuve, Arturo, 59
Casey, Joe, 334
Cash, Cole, 391
Casper the Friendly Ghost, 60
Cassaday, John, 157 (ill.), 264 (ill.), 265, 287, 407
Cassidy, Black Tom, 411, 416
Cassidy, David, 145
Cassidy, Sean, 405, 410, 412
Cassidy, Theresa, 416
Castellini, Claudio, 177 (ill.)
Castiglione, Frank, 273
Castle, Christie, 274
Castle, Frank, 273–74, 275
Castle, Frank, Jr., 274
The Cat, 342
Catalyst, Agents of Change, 111
Catastrophe, 279
Catman, 138
Cat-Man, 3, 340
Catwoman, 49, 50, 54, **94–96,** 95 (ill.), 96 (ill.), 186, 209, 282, 339, 342, 343–44, 358, 359, 398
Caulder, Niles, 122, 284
Caulfield, Emma, 68
Cavadini, Catherine, 272
Celestials, 131
Celsius, 123
Celtic Viking, 279
Centaur Publications, 2, 265
Century, 216
Century Babies, 265
Cerise, 409
Certa, Joe, 226
Cervantes, 215
Cha, Keu, 280 (ill.)
Chabon, Michael, 112, 313, 319
Chadwick, Paul, 109
Challenge of the Super Friends, 325
Challengers of the Unknown, **96–98,** 97 (ill.)
Chamber, 411, 412
Chamberlin, Doug, 377
Chameleon, 308
Chameleon Boy, 217–18
Champions, 65, 335, 336, 337
Chan, Ernie, 199, 269
Chandra, Elizabeth, 281
Chang, Percival Edmund “Eddy,” 151
Changeling, 366, 367
Chaos! Comics, 16
Chapel, 303
Charest, Travis, 392
Charles, Nick, 130
Charles, Nora, 130
Charlie-27, 161, 301
Charlie's Angels, 342, 344
Charlton Bullseye, 87
Charlton Comics, 13, 86, 87, 262, 389
Charlton heroes, **98–100,** 99 (ill.)
Charybdis, 204
Chase, Adrian, 387
Chase, Cordelia, 67, 68
Chase, Danny, 366, 367
Chaykin, Howard, 98, 145, 295
Cheadle, Don, 203
Cheetah, 325, 358, 398, 401
Chemo, 233, 234, 360
Chen, Mike, 129
Chenault, Claire, 289
Cheshire, 366, 367
Cheung, Jim, 419
Chiang, Cliff, 402
Chichester, Dan, 109
Chief, 122, 123, 333
Chief Skullface, 245
Chiklis, Michael, 18, 135 (ill.), 136
Children of the Sun, 116
Chiller, 117
Chinese, 245, 246, 247
Chippy, 25
Choi, Brandon, 151, 392, 392 (ill.)
Choi, Ryan, 36, 249
Chop Chop, 245
Chop Suey, 244
Chou, Jay, 158
Christian, 215
Christman, Bert, 289
Christopher, Gerard, 328
Chrome, 152
Chronos, 35, 359
Chua, Ernie, 12 (ill.)
Chuck D, 238
Chunk, 145, 334
Church, Thomas Haden, 78, 313
Churchill, Winston, 196
Cifuentes, Vicente, 47
Cinnabar Flats, 111
Circe, 131–32, 401
Cisco Kid, 245
Citizen Prime, 279
Citizen V, 355
City of Heroes, 337
City of Villains, 337
Civil War, 202, 357
Claremont, Chris
  Gen 13, 152
  Guardians of the Galaxy, 162

  Iron Fist, 198–99
  lampooned in *Radioactive Man*, 45
  Ms. Marvel, 243
  multiculturalism, 249
  Power Man, 269
  Spider-Woman, 314
  Supergirl, 331
  Warlock, 301
  Wild Cards, 25
  Wolverine, 394, 395, 396
  X Men, 405–6, 407
  X-Men: Excalibur, 408
  X-Men: New Mutants, 412
Clarendon, George, 293
Clark, Matthew, 154
Claw, 4, 103, 104, 245, 358, 359
Clay, Sam, 112
Clayface, 56, 357, 359
Clea, 121
Cleft the Boy Chin Wonder, 334
Cleland, John, 216
Clements, Chris, 45
Cloak and Dagger, 248, 271, 343
Clock, 2
Clock King, 155
Clone Saga, 310
Clooney, George, 158
Clowes, Daniel, 25
Clown, 358
"Club of Heroes," 245
Cluemaster, 47
Clyde, 293
Cobra, 357, 370
Cobweb, 27
Cockroach, 75
Cockrum, Dave, 218, 244, 404, 405
Coffield, Kelly, 78
Coghlan, Frank, Jr., 93
Cogliostro, 304
Cohen, Mitchell, 78
Coil Man, 165, 331
Coipel, Olivier, 373
Colan, Gene, 39, 65, 107, 121, 125, 161, 202, 243, 323
Colbert, Stephen, 79
Cole, Gary, 307
Cole, Jack, 5, 32, 103, 265–67, 317
Cole, Kasper, 62
Colletta, Vince, 370 (ill.)
Collins, Eddie, 296
Collins, Michael, 302
Collins, Rusty, 413
Collyer, Bud, 31, 346
Colón, Ernie, 271
Colonizers of Rigel, 371
Colossal Boy, 217
Colossus, 13, 247, 404, 409, 412
Colt, 138
Colt, Denny, 316
Combs, Jeffrey, 100, 313
Comedian, 99, 390, 391
Comet, 3, 32, 33, 256
Comet Man, 302
Comet the Super-Horse, 329, 348
Comic Book: The Movie, 79
comic book collecting, 16
Comic Book Culture (Goulart), 4
Comic Book Guy, 44, 45, 76
comic book history
  Bronze Age (1970-1980), 11–14, 12 (ill.), 13 (i.l.), 14 (ill.)
  early sales, 4–5
  Golden Age (1938-1954), 1–7, 3 (i.l.), 5 (ill.), 6 (ill.)
  Late Bronze Age (1980-1984), 14–15
  Modern Age (1985 present), 15–19, 17 (ill.), 19 (ill.)
Comic Book Nation (Wright), 8
Comic Book Superheroes: Unmasked (History Channel), 12, 14–15
Comic House, 103
Comic-Con, 279
Comico the Comic Company, 15, 110, 129, 287
Comics and Sequential Art, 317
Comics Code Authority (CCA), 6, 12, 15, 45, 238, 270, 273, 353, 359
Comics Magazine Association of America, 6
Commander, 79
Commander Kraken, 323
Commandette, 340
Commando Cody, 286
Commando Yank, 71, 355
communism, 6, 355
The Company, 174
Composite Superman, 360
Computo, 218, 360
Conan the Barbarian, 12, 14, 342
Concrete, 16, 109–10
Condor, 256
Condorman, 77
Confessor, 34
Congorilla, 352
Connell, Ken, 24
Connelly, Jennifer, 183, 287
Conner, Amanda, 76, 77
Conners, Rudy, 198
Connery, Sean, 192, 216, 216 (ill.)
Connors, Curt, 313
Conqueror, 354
Conroy, Buzz, 165
Conroy, Chris, 377
Conroy, Kevin, 264, 337, 338
Constantine, 386
Constantine, John, 16, 265, 386
Contrary, 378
Conway, Gerry, 14, 40, 140, 209, 243, 273, 275, 309, 331, 371
Conway, Tim, 79
Coogan, Peter, 19, 353
Cooke, Darwyn, 98, 207, 319, 350
Cooper, James Fenimore, 216
Coppola, Christopher, 225
Coppola, Francis Ford, 225
Coppola, Nicolas, 269
Copycat, 416
Corazon, Anya, 315–16
Corben, Richard, 270
Cornell, Paul, 204, 393
Corrigan, Jim, 305, 306, 307
Corruptor, 256
Cosmic Boy, 8, 217, 218, 219
Cosmic Cube, 186
Cosmic Enforcers, 337
Cosmic King, 360
Cosmic Rock Zombie Radio, 220, 221
Cosmo the Spacedog, 163
Costanza, Pete, 92
costumes, 2
Coto, Manny, 311
The Count, 138
Count Nefaria, 200
Count Yuscha Liffso, 140
Countdown to Final Crisis, 231, 253
Countdown to Infinite Crisis, 67
Countdown to Mystery, 120
Counter-Earth, 301
Counterweight, 271
Coupland, Douglas, 409–12
Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse, 77, 147, 331
Coutts, Ed, 139
Cover, Arthur Byron, 281
Covert Action Team, 391
Cowan, Denys, 199, 237, 269
Cox, Courteney, 78
Cox, Wally, 147
Coyote, 248
Crabapple, Molly, 25
Crabtree, Bill, 197 (ill.)
CRACKED Magazine, 76
Craddock, Gentleman Jim, the Gentleman Ghost, 325
Crag, 334
Craig, Yvonne, 46, 51
Crain, Clayton, 417
Cramer, Herman, 193
Cramer, Inza, 119–20
Crandall, Reed, 5, 374
Crane, Candy, 77
Crane, Robert, 283–84
Cranston, Billy, 235, 236
Cranston, Lamont, 293, 294
Crash Nebula, 334
Crawford, Michael, 77
Crazy Eight, 315
Crazy Gang, 408
Crazy Jane, 123, 386
creator-owned comic books, 15
The Creeper, **100–101,** 100 (ill.), 206, 294
Crime Buster, 256
Crime Crusaders Club, 71
Crime Does Not Pay, 66, 103, 104
Crimebuster, 355
Crimefighter Crops, 279
Crimefighter Girl, 279
Crime Master, 308
Criminal Macabre, 305
Crimson Avenger, 2, 208, 387
Crimson Bolt, 26
Crimson Centipede, 398
Crimson Chin, 334
Crimson Dynamo, 361
Crimson Fist, 279
Crippen, Jarrett, 280

Crisis at Crusaders Citadel, 336
Crisis on Infinite Earths, 15, 99, 145, 167, 168, 187, 210, 341, 349, 399
Crisscross, 238 (ill.)
Critical Maas, 281
Croce, Jim, 349
Croft, Lara, 344
Cromwell, James, 313
Crosby, Cathy Lee, 399
Cross, Chris, 332
Cross, Christy, 332
Cross Technologies, 169
Crossfire, 15, 125–26
Crothers, Scatman, 166
Crow, 16, 353, 358
Crudup, Billy, 391
Crusade Comics, 17
Crusader, 229
Crusader Rabbit, 147
Crush, 112
Cruz, E. R., 295
Cruz, Hero, 116–17
Cruz, Roger, 407
Cryll, 300
Crystal, 194, 195, 278
Cuckoo Man, 331
Cugino, Carla, 391
Curly, 104
Curran, Tony, 216 (ill.)
Curry, Arthur, 30
Curry, Tom, 30
Custer, Jesse, 16
Cutey Bunny, 149
Cuti, Nick, 99
CyberFace, 291
Cyberforce, 190
Cyblade, 128, 344
Cyborg, 207, 248, 326, 366, 367, 368
cyborg, 283
Cyclops, 247, 341, 395, 396, 403, 405, 407, 412, 414, 415, 417
Cypher, 413, 414
Cypress, Tawney, 175 (ill.)
Czar of Fear, 118
Czarnia, 220

D

d'Abo, Olivia, 161
Dacia, Aric, 383
DaCosta, Roberto, 412
Daemonites, 391, 393
Daffy Duck, 148, 161
Daffy the Great, 116
Dafoe, Willem, 312, 363
Dagger, 248, 343
Dagnino, Fernando, 353
Dagon, 367
Daily, Elizabeth, 152, 272
Daily Planet, 347
Daken, 395–96
Dakota, 237, 238
Dale, Joan, 146
Dalrymple, Farel, 302
Dalton, Timothy, 287
Damage, 367
Damage, Max, 204
Damian, 53
Damien DarkLord, 291
Dandy, 355
Dane, Darrell, 146
Dane, Lorna, 404, 414
Danger Girl, 190
Danger Mouse, 148
Daniel, Tony, 171, 419
Daniels, Les, 13, 127
Daniels, William, 77
Danny the Street, 123, 386
Danuta, 56
Danvers, Carol, 89, 243, 244
Danvers, Linda Lee, 329, 330
d'Arbo, Frank, 25
Daredevil (movie), 18, 108, 128
Daredevil I, 3, 4, 63, **103–5,** 358, 368
Daredevil II, 9, 15, **105–9**, 105 (ill.), 106 (ill.), 108 (ill.), 127, 128, 308, 343, 361, 362, 363
Dargo, 372
Daring, Max, 204
Dark Angel, 344
Dark Avengers, 229, 292
Dark Dhagor, 137
Dark Guardian, 279
Dark Horse Comics, 15, 16, 17, 119, 171, 224, 232, 287, 295, 384
Dark Horse heroes, **109–12,** 109 (ill.), 110 (ill.), 111 (ill.)
The Dark Knight, 16, 53, 54 (ill.), 363
The Dark Knight Returns, 107
Dark Phoenix, 363, 405
Darkchylde, 344
Darkfire, 138
Darkhaven, Laurel, 281
Darkhawk, 254
Darkman (movie), 18
The Darkness, 305
Darkseid, 11, 141, 218, 251, 252–53, 326, 361–62, 401
Darkshadow, 281
Darkstar, 367
Darkwing, 197
Darkwing Duck, 148, 333
Darling, Frank, 290
Darnell, Linda, 58
Darwin, 415
Daughters of the Dragon, 176, 177, 199
Davey, John, 93
David, Peter, 40, 76, 79, 181, 182, 190, 222, 414, 419
David McKay Company, 262
Davies, Ryan, 197
Davis, Alan, 40, 239, 259, 407–9
Davis, Bette, 317
Davis, Larry, 73
Davis, Mavis, 44
Davis, Michael, 237
Davis, Phil, 262
Davis, Rocky, 97
Davis, Shane, 350
Dawes, Rachel, 53
Dawnstar, 248
Dayton, Steve, 122
Dazzler, 342, 406, 416
DC Comics
    alternative superheroes, 25
    direct sales marketing, 15
    Marvel becomes industry leader, 11
    origins of Superman, 346
    sidekicks introduced, 3
    Superman introduced, 2
    vs. Marvel during Bronze Age, 13–14
DC Entertainment, 18
DC Heroes Role Playing Game, 336, 337
DC Nation (TV), 18
DC Universe Online role-playing game, 337
DC Universe Roleplaying Game, 337
DC's Guardian, 279
de Lancie, John, 152, 161
Dead End, 279
Dead Girl, 417
Dead Ranger, 265
Deadly Duo, 291
Deadman, 51, **112–13,** 113 (ill.), 222, 264, 303, 352, 386
Deadpool, **113–14,** 114 (ill.), 363, 417
Deadshot, 362, 363, 364
Dean, Betty, 322
Dearborn, Sue, 130
Death, 290, 354
Death of the New Gods, 253
Deathbird, 243
Deathblow, 393
Death-Defying 'Devil, 63, 105
Deathlok, 248, 302
Deathmate Black, 151
Death-Ray, 25
Deathstroke the Terminator, 366, 367, 368
Debbin, Snagg, 317
Dee, Jeff, 335, 336
DeFalco, Tom, 40, 253, 256–57, 315, 371
Defender, 354
The Defenders, **114–16,** 115 (ill.), 122, 181, 269, 299
Defenders of the Earth, 333, 352
Defuser, 280
Degaton, 209
DeGuere, Phillip, 121
Dekko, 127
del Toro, Guillermo, 111, 174
Delany, Samuel R., 398
Delicate Creatures, 190
Dell Publishing, 1
DeMatteis, J. M., 204, 206, 207, 227, 228
Demo and the Submen, 374
Demon, 11, 353
Denisof, Alexis, 68
Dennis, Paul, 283
Dent, Harvey, 53
Dent, Lester, 117, 118, 119
Depatie-Freleng Enterprises, 314
DePaul, Kirk, 226

Der, Richard, 294
Des Moines Register and Tribune Syndicate, 316
Desaad, 231, 252, 253, 326, 362
Despero, 205, 360
Despicable Me, 80
DeStefano, Stephen, 75
Destiny, 323
Destroyer, 63–64, 196, 271, 355
Destroyer Duck, 126, 148
Destroyers, 336
Detective Comics, 2, 8, 48, 130, 225, 226, 341
Detective Story, 293
Deviants, 131
Devil, 262
Dey, Rhomann, 256
DeZago, Todd, 419
Dezuniga, Tony, 119
Diablo, 360
"Dial 'H' for Hero," **116–17**, 117 (ill.), 227
Diamond Jack, 70
Diamond Lil, 23
Diamondback, 362
Diamondhead, 256, 257
Diaper Man, 331
Diaz, Cameron, 158, 232, 344
Dibny, Ralph, 130, 144
Dibny, Sue, 130
Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day at a Time (Giordano), 98
Dictionary, 387
DiDio, Dan, 18, 302
Die Another Day, 344
Difilippis, Nunzio, 414
Diggle, Andy, 109
Dillin, Dick, 146, 206, 284
DiMaggio, John, 388
Dingle, Derek, 237
Dini, Paul, 18, 53, 79, 96, 207, 253, 337, 338, 422
Dino Boy, 165
Dinosaur Task Force, 236, 237
Dippé, Mark A. Z., 304
Dipreta, Tony, 104
direct sales marketing, 15
Dirt Devil, 377
Dirty Trixie, 333
Ditko, Steve
    Blue Beetle, 66–67, 66 (ill.)
    Creeper, 100–101, 100 (ill.)
    Doctor Strange, 121
    Eclipse, 126
    Hawk and the Dove, 167
    Kirbyverse, 214
    moves to DC Comics, 11
    Mr. A, 24
    Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., 121 (ill.)
    problem-plagued superheroes, 9
    Question, 98, 99–100
    Shade the Changing Man, 386
    Space Adventures, 86, 87, 87 (ill.)
    Speedball, 254
    Spider-Man, 307, 309, 310
    Starman, 321
    T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, 374
Division 13, 111
Dixon, Chuck, 56, 260
DNAgent Tank, 125
DNAgents, 15, 125, 126 (ill.), 291
Doc Savage, 2, 13, **117–19**, 118 (ill.), 286
Dockwell, 391
"Doctor" entries. See *also* "Dr." entries
Doctor, 37
Doctor Diman, 242
Doctor Doom, 134, 136, 361, 362, 363
Doctor Double-X, 359
Doctor Fate, 3, 8, **119–20**, 206, 208, 211, 320, 352, 357, 358
Doctor Fate (M.F. Publications villain), 10
Doctor Mist, 248
Doctor Octopus, 308, 309, 312, 315, 361
Doctor Polaris, 359
Doctor Psycho, 357, 398, 401, 402
Doctor Regulus, 360
Doctor Spectrum, 319
Doctor Strange, 9, 61, 79, 114, 115, 116, **120–22**, 121 (ill.), 181, 304, 314–15, 352, 361
Dodd, Wesley, 289, 290
Dodson, Terry, 402, 410 (ill.)
Dog, 395
Dolan, Ellen, 316, 318, 319
Dolan, Eustace, 316
Doll Girl, 340
Doll Man, 2, 35, 146, 147, 340, 357
Dolph, 45
Dolphin, 31
Domino, 417
Domino, Johnny, 378
Dominus, 363
Donatello, 368
Donenfeld, Harry, 2, 208
Donenfeld, Irwin, 8, 193
Donner, Richard, 256, 350
Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960 (MacDonald), 245
Doom Patrol, **122–23**, 123 (ill.), 341, 365, 385–86
Doomsday, 363
Doop, 417
Doorman, 40
Doran, Colleen, 272
Dorgan, Ron, 44
Dorkin, Evan, 76
Dormammu, 121, 314, 361
Dorn, Michael, 253
Dorno, 166
Double Header, 140
The Double Life of Private Strong, 355
Doubledare, 104
Double-Dare Adventures, 11 (ill.)
Dove. See The Hawk and the Dove
Dowling, Randall, 265
Downey, Robert, Jr., 41, 203
Dox, Lyrl, 221
Dox, Vril, II, 221
Dozier, William, 77, 157
"Dr." entries. *See also* "Doctor" entries
Dr. Alchemy, 359
Dr. Cobra, 316
Dr. Cyber, 398
Dr. Death, 357
Dr. Demon, 295
Dr. Destiny, 235, 360
Dr. Dred, 332
Dr. Drew, 263
Dr. Droog, 320
Dr. Eternity, 90
Dr. Evil, 80, 361
Dr. Fu Manchu, 200, 215, 245
Dr. Girlfriend, 79
Dr. Gruesome, 193
Dr. Kilemoff, 333
Dr. Light, 130, 205, 206, 360, 365
Dr. Manhattan, 88, 99, 390, 391
Dr. Mid-Nite, 208, 210, 211
Dr. Occult, 352, 386
Dr. Orpheus, 79
Dr. Poison, 397
Dr. Riddle, 357
Dr. Scarab, 333
Dr. Sivana, 90, 91, 92, 357, 363
Dr. Solar, 10, 87
Dr. Sparta, 374
Dr. Spectro, 87, 88, 361
Dr. Spider, 290
Dr. Strangelove, 234
Dr. 13, 263
Dr. Weird, 71
Dracula, 314, 325
Dracula (Stoker), 215
Dragon King, 315
Dragon Man, 360
Drak, 332
Drake, Arnold, 112, 122, 161, 284
Drake, Bobby, 403
Drake, Dinah, 57
Drake, Marla, 241–42
Drake, Tim, 52, 260, 283, 367, 419
Drat Pack, 332
Draven, Eric, 353
Drax the Destroyer, 163
Dream, Prince of Stories, 290
Dream Queen, 23
Dredd, Judge, 222
Drew, Billy, 314
Drew, Jessica, 314–15
Drumm, Darius, 213
Drummer, 264–65
Drusilla, 68
Duchamp, John Paul, 242
Duck Dodgers, 148
Duffy, Mary Jo, 199, 269
Dugan, Pat, 321
Dulcet Tone, 317
Dumb Bunny, 74, 193, 194
Dummy, 358, 387
Dunaway, Faye, 330
Duncan, Mal, 365

Duncan, Michael Clarke, 161, 313, 343
Dung, 291
Dungeons and Dragons, 335, 337
Dunn, David, 18
Dunn, Dr., 374
Dunst, Kirsten, 312, 313
The Duo, 78
Dupli Kate, 197, 198
Duquesne, Kathy, 55
Dushku, Eliza, 68
Dusty, 355
Duursema, Jan, 228
Dweller of the Depths, 31
Dwyer, Kieron, 40
Dyer, Sarah, 343
DynaGirl, 14, 342
Dynamic Duo, 49, 282
Dynamic Man, 63, 196, 285
Dynamite, 374
Dynamite Entertainment, 17, 63, 104
Dynamo, 373, 374
Dynavac, 374
Dynomutt, 78, 148, 166, 167, 285, 332

E

Eagle, 112, 354, 355
Eaglesham, Dale, 210
Earhart, Amelia, 340
Earhart, Edward, 141
Earth Prime, 210
Earth X, 210
Earth X, 122
Earth-One, 206
Earth-S, 210
Earth-712, 319, 320
Earth-Two, 95, 186, 187, 206, 209, 210
Eastman, Kevin, 75, 336, 368, 369
Echo, 169, 248
Eckhart, Aaron, 53
Eclipse Comics, 15, 240, 286
Eclipse heroes, **125–27**, 126 (ill.)
Eclipse Magazine, 126
Eclipso, 234, 360
Eden, Eve, 87
Edge, 313
Edlund, Ben, 75
Edmondson, Nathan, 392, 393
Egeland, Martin, 176, 199
Egg Fu, 398
Egghead, 29, 360
Ego the Living Planet, 371
Egon N'g, 220
Eightball, 25
The Eighth Man, 331
Eiling, Wade, 88
Einstein, Albert, 37
Einstein, Frank, 223–24
Eisner, Will
  Blue Beetle, 66
  Escapist, 112
  Flame, 63
  Spirit, 3, 5, 27, 112, 191, 266, 316, 317, 317 (ill.), 318, 319
  Uncle Sam, 146, 354
  Wonder Man, 2
El Aguila, 248, 423
El Diablo, 248, 423
El Dorado, 326
El Kabong, 147, 165, 423
El Toro, 29
Elastigirl, 122, 123, 191, 192, 341
Elasti-Woman, 123, 192
Elasto, 295
ElectraWoman, 14, 342
Electro, 196, 285, 308, 361
Electrocute, 378
Electron, 320
Elektra, 15, 17, 107, 108, **127–28**, 127 (ill.), 177, 343
Elektra (movie), 18
Elektro, 285
Element Girl, 235
Element Lad, 218
Element Man, 234
Elementals, 15, **129–30**, 129 (ill.), 336
Elevator Man, 331
Elgin, Jill, 59
Elias, Lee, 59, 59 (ill.), 60, 199
Eliopoulos, Chris, 136
Elixir, 414, 417
Elliott, Sam, 183
Ellis, Warren, 24, 37, 202, 264, 265, 285
Ellison, Harlan, 39, 116, 181, 382
Eloise, 262
Elongated Man, **130–31**, 144, 206, 227
Ely, Ron, 119
E-Man, 13, 99, 291
Emerald Archer, 155
Emerald Crusader, 159
Emerald Dawn, 160
Emperor Kurr, 291
Endless, 385
Endless Nights, 290
Energizer, 270
Enforcers, 308
Engineer, 36–37
Englehart, Steve
  Avengers, 40
  Batman, 51
  Captain America, 84
  Doctor Strange, 121
  Eclipse, 126
  multiculturalism, 247, 248, 249
  Power Man, 268
  Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, 278
  Quill, Peter, 301
  Silver Surfer, 299
  Ultraverse heroes, 377
Ennis, Garth, 77, 275
Entomo the Insect-Man, 279–80
Epting, Steve, 40
Erdel, Mark, 226, 228
Escapist, 112, 319
The Escapists, 112
Escobar, Luis, 45
Espinosa, Angelo, 411
Esposito, Mike, 398
Estrada, Ric, 331
Eternals, **131–32**, 131 (ill.)
Eternity, 121
Etrigan, 353
Evanier, Mark, 15, 76, 79, 125, 126, 126 (ill.), 319
Evans, Chris, 41, 85 (ill.), 86, 135 (ill.), 136, 369
Everett, Bill, 5, 105, 180, 184, 185, 196, 229, 254, 321–23, 322 (ill.)
Evil Star, 159
Evilheart, 74
Excalibur, 407–9
Excelsior, 272
Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee (Lee), 9, 134
Executioner, 274, 358
Extant, 168
Extrano, 249
Extreme Justice Group, 88
Extreme Studios, 296
Exxor, 325
Eye of Agamotto, 121
Ezquerra, Carlos, 302

F

Faerber, Jay, 177, 199, 200
Fah Lo Suee, 265
Fairbanks, Douglas, Sr., 48, 422, 423
Fairchild, 151, 152
Fairchild, Caitlin, 151, 152
The Fairly Oddparents, 334
Faith, 68, 207
Falcon, 84, 177, 247
Falconio, Maria, 273, 274
Falk, Lee, 261, 262, 421
Fallon, Sparrow, 317
Falsworth, Brian, 64
Famous Funnies, 1
Fanboy, 76
Fandral, 371
Fanny Hill (Cleland), 216
Fantastic Fear, 75
Fantastic Four, **133–36**, 134 (ill.), 135 (ill.), 364 (ill.)
  Cage, Luke, 269
  cartoons, 166, 332, 333
  enemies, 360–61
  first black superhero, 10
  Him, 301
  Hulk, 177, 178
  Inhumans, 194
  Justice League of America, 38, 39
  Kookie Quartet, 193
  Power Pack, 271
  Silver Surfer, 298
  Spider-Man, 308
  Storm, Johnny, 186
  Sub-Mariner, 323
  on TV, 10
  villains, 360–61
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer, 135 (ill.), 136

Fantastic Four (movie), 18
Fantom of the Fair, 2
Fantomah, 338
Fantomex, 417
Farmer, Philip José, 119
Farnsworth, Brian, 196
Farnsworth, Jacqueline, 196
Farnsworth, Lord, 196
Farr, Rita, 122, 123, 192
Farrell, Colin, 108
Fass, Myron, 88
Fassbender, Michael, 415 (ill.)
Fatal Five, 218, 360
Fatality, 363
Fate, 120
Fate, Doctor. See Doctor Fate
Fathom, 129, 190
Fatman, the Human Flying Saucer, 74
Faust, Felix, 205, 326, 360
Favreau, Jon, 203
Fawcett Comics, 70, 71, 91, 92, 93, 230
Fawkes, Guy, 381
Fear Itself, 86
Fearforce, 138
Fearless Fly, 148
Fearsome Five, 334, 366
Feedback, 280
Feiffer, Jules, 317, 318
Felder, James, 199
Feldon, Jerry, 117
Feldstein, Al, 34
Felonious Gru, 80
Femforce, **137–39,** 137 (ill.)
Fem-Force, 291
Fem-Paragon, 138
Ferguson, Craig, 32
Feron, 409
Ferrell, Will, 80
Ferrer, Miguel, 228, 302
Ferrigno, Lou, 183, 184
Ferris, Carol, 159, 161
Ferry, Paschalis, 176, 199
Fey, Tina, 80
Fiddler, 143, 358, 365, 387
Field, Sally, 313
Fields, Daisy, 44
Fiery Mask, 196
The Fightin' Five, 87
Fighting America, 355
Fighting American, 6, 10, 74, **139–40,** 139 (ill.), 355
Fighting Yank, 4, 63, 105, 355, 359
Fillion, Nathan, 70, 161, 388
Fin, 196
Fin Fang Foom, 177
Fin Fang Four, 285
Final Crisis, 253
Final Crisis: Superman Beyond, 194
Finch, David, 243
Fine, Lou, 5, 63, 146, 317
Finger, Bill, 48, 94, 158
Fingerman, Bob, 25
Finn, Riley, 68
Finster, 236
Fire, 227, 248, 343
Firearm, 378
Firebird, 248
Firebrand, 146, 147, 210
Firebreather, 191
Firefly, 100
Firelord, 163
Firestar, 229, 253, 254
Firestorm, **140–42,** 206, 248, 326
First American, 27, 140, 355
First Comics, 15, 44
Fishburne, Laurence, 300, 369
Fisherman, 360
Fisk, Randy, 281
Fite, Linda, 342
Fixer, 105
Fixit, Joe, 182
Flag, 354
Flag, Jack, 163
Flagg, 281
Flagg, James Montgomery, 146, 354
Flagg, Johnny, 139–40, 355
Flagg, Nelson, 139–40, 355
Flagman, 4, 354
Flame, 2, 63, 71
Flame Girl, 3, 71, 340
Flamebird, 256
Flaming Carrot, 75, 78, 110
The Flash, **142–45,** 143 (ill.)
    death of, 15
    Hawkman, 170
    the Incredibles, 192
    introduced, 3
    Justice League of America, 205, 207
    Justice Society of America, 3, 208, 210, 211
    multiculturalism, 246
    parallel worlds, 8
    reintroduced, 7–8
    Saturday Night Live skit, 78
    Super Friends, 324, 325, 326
    supervillains, 358, 359
    Teen Titans, 367, 368
    Thinker, 357
    on TV, 17
    Young Justice, 419
Flash Gordon, 80, 99, 170, 262, 300, 333
Flat Man, 40
Flathead, 334
Flea, 152
Fleisher, Michael, 306, 314
Flem, Gillespie, 223
Flesh, 333
Flesh and Bones, 315
Flessel, Creig, 61, 289
Flex, 23
"Flight of the Bumblebee," 158
Flintstones, 165, 332
Florida, 279
Fluid Man, 165, 331, 332
Fly, 10, 32, 33
Fly-Girl, 33, 341
Flying Tigers, 289
Fly-Man, 10, 33, 341
Flynn, Errol, 287
Fonebone, Ringo, 74
Foot, 369
Forbush-Man, 74
Force of July, 259, 356
Force Works, 169, 278
Forces of Order, 167, 168
Foreman, Travel, 386
Forever People, 11, 251, 252
Forge, 248, 406, 414
Forgotten One, 132
Foster, Bill, 29
Foster, Jane, 176, 370, 371, 373
Foster, Stormy, 355
Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, 263
Fourth World, 252, 253, 326, 361–62
Fox, Gardner
    Adam Strange, 21
    Atom, 35
    Doctor Fate, 119
    Elongated Man, 130
    Flash, 143
    Hawkman, 170
    Justice League of America, 205, 206
    Justice Society of America, 208, 209
    Martian Manhunter, 227
    multiculturalism, 246
    Red Tornado, 284
    Sandman, 289
    Spectre, 306
    Starman, 320
    Zatanna and Zatara, 421
Fox, Gill, 266
Fox, Jon, 145
Fox, Lucius, 53
Fox, Spencer, 192
Fox, Victor, 2, 65–66
Fox Comics, 58, 66
Fox Features Syndicate, 2
Fraction, Matt, 200, 202, 275, 373
Fradon, Ramona, 234, 235, 235 (ill.), 267, 325 (ill.)
Francisco, Eduardo, 384
Franco, James, 312, 313
Frank, Gary, 320, 350
Frankenstein, 196, 211, 325
Frankenstein Jr., 77, 165, 167, 285, 331
Frankie, 332
Franklin, Martha "Mattie," 315
Franklin Richards: Son of a Genius, 136
Freak, 202
Freak Force, 291
Freckles Marvel, 231
Fred and Barney Meet the Thing, 136
Freedom Battalion, 208
Freedom Brigade, 193
Freedom Fighters, 13, **145–47,** 146 (ill.), 356
Freedom Force, 332
Freefall, 151, 152
Freeman, Freddy, 90, 231
Freeman, Morgan, 53
Freex, 378
Freight Train, 260

Fremont, T. C., 138
Fremont, "Too Tall" Tara, 138
Frenchie, 242
Frenz, Ron, 253, 315, 371
Frew Company, 263
Friedrich, Gary, 153, 180
Frightful Four, 194
Fringe, 367
Fritz, 293
Frost, Adrienne, 411, 412
Frost, Cordelia, 411
Frost, Emma, 410, 411, 412, 413
Frost, Jack Q., 10
Frost, Whitney, 200, 202
Frosty, 116
Frozone, 192, 248
Fruitman, 74
Fry, James W., 126, 254
Fry, Stephen, 382
Fryes, Eddie, 156
Fu Tong, 104
Fuchs, Bernie, 242
Fujit, Tempus J., 317
Funnies Inc., 184, 185, 321
Funnies on Parade, 1
funny animal heroes, **147–49**, 148 (ill.)
Funnyman, 73
The Further Adventures of Super-Ted, 333
Fury, 210
Fury, Nick, 7 (ill.), 41, 203, 246, 248, 265, 313
The Fury of Firestorm, the Nuclear Man, 141
Future Foundation, 136, 272
Fuzzbuster, 44
Fuzzy Lumpkins, 334

G

Gabrielle, Al, 58
Gabrielson, Dave/Don, 62
Gage, Christos, 70, 392
Gagunza, Emil, 239
Gaia, 248, 411
Gaiman, Neil, 16, 132, 235, 240, 241, 290, 304, 318, 385
Gaines, Max (M. C.), 208
Galactic, 112
Galactic Rangers, 213
Galactus, 61, 134, 163, 256, 271, 298, 299, 360–61
Galaxy Girl, 166, 332
The Galaxy Trio, 166
Galifianakis, Zach, 79
Gallagher, David, 327
Gallagher, Joe, 35
Gallagher, Michael, 163
Galli, Sven, 317
Gallows, Jake, 275
Gambit, 406
Gambler, 358
gaming, 335–38
Gammill, Kerry, 199, 269
Gamora, 163
Gamorra, Kaizen, 37
Gan, Steve, 301
Gang Green Gang, 272
Gangbuster, 248
Garber, Victor, 161
Garboil, 58
Garcia, Manuel, 40
Gardner, Ava, 317
Gardner, Guy, 160, 161, 206
Garfield, Andrew, 313
Garganta, 138, 139
Gargoyle, 116
Garner, James, 94
Garner, Jennifer, 108, 108 (ill.), 128, 343
Garofalo, Janeane, 78, 110
Garret, Dan, 66
Garrett, Nathan, 60
Garrick, Jay, 7, 143, 144
Gas Gang, 233
Gates, Sterling, 168
Gateway, 411
Gaucho, 245
gay superheroes, 23, 249
Gebbie, Melinda, 27
Gee, 270
Geiger, Steve, 199, 269
Geist, 279
Gellar, Sarah Michelle, 67, 69 (ill.), 369
Geller, Uri, 107
Gemini, 279
Gen 13, **151–52**, 152 (ill.), 190, 391, 393
General Bruno, 241
General Electric, 290
General Fang, 180
General Immortus, 122
General Zod, 256
Generation X, 409–12
Genesis, 416
Genis-Vell, 89, 301
Gentleman, 149
Gentleman Ghost, 325, 358
Geo-Force, 259, 260
geomancers, 383–84
George of the Jungle, 148
Geraci, Drew, 255 (ill.)
Gerber, Steve
    Avengers, 40
    Defenders, 115
    Destroyer Duck, 126, 148–49
    Doctor Fate, 120
    Eclipse, 125
    Guardians of the Galaxy, 162
    Omega the Unknown, 301
    She-Hulk, 297
    Ultraverse heroes, 377
Germans, 244
Gershon, Gina, 96, 312
G-Girl, 79
Ghost, 17, 87, 170, 174, 344, 354
Ghost, 16, 109 (ill.), 112
Ghost (real-life superhero), 279
Ghost Breaker, 263
Ghost in the Shell, 112
Ghost Rider, 12, 18, 65, **153–55**, 153 (ill.), 154 (ill.), 177, 243, 353
"Ghost Riders in the Sky," 153
Ghost Who Walks, 261, 262
Ghost Woman, 340
Ghoul, 104, 378
GI Joe, 80, 81
Giacchino, Michael, 192
Giacoia, Frank, 39, 61 (ill.), 115 (ill.), 153 (ill.)
Giant Sized Invaders, 195, 195 (ill.)
Giant-Man, 29, 30, 39, 60, 178, 323
Giant-Size Defenders, 115 (ill.)
Giant-Size X-Men, 13 (ill.), 247, 394
Giant-X Men, 404, 405
Gibbons, Dave, 16, 26, 318, 344, 389–91, 389 (ill.)
Gibson, Shock, 2
Gibson, Walter, 293, 294, 295
Gideon, Guy, 234
Giffen, Keith
    Ambush Bug, 75
    Doom Patrol, 123
    Hero Squared, 204
    Justice League of America, 206, 207
    Kirbyverse, 214
    Legion of Super-Heroes, 218, 219
    Lobo, 219
    Martian Manhunter, 227
    OMAC: One Man Army Corps, 302
    Rocket Raccoon, 149
Giganta, 325, 398, 401
Gilbert, Guy, 374
Gilded Lily, 23
Giles, Rupert, 67, 70
Gilgamesh, 132
Gilgamos, 204
Gill, Joe, 87, 99
Gillis, Peter B., 24, 132, 181
Gingold soft drink, 130
Giordano, Dick
    Batman, 51
    Captain Atom, 87, 88
    Charlton, 98, 99
    The Hawk and the Dove, 167
    Nukla, 10 (ill.)
    Supergirl, 330
    Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man, 14, 14 (ill.)
    Wonder Woman, 398
Girdle of Gaea, 399
Girl Commandos, 340, 354
Gizmo Man, 332
Gladiator, 105, 302, 361
Glasberg, Gary, 45
Glau, Summer, 18, 331
Gleason, Lev, 103, 104, 245
Gleek, 324
Gleep, 166
Glidden, Mark, 139
Glob, 290
Global Guardians, 247–48
Global Peace Agency, 302
Gloop, 166

- Glop, 398
- Glorious Godfrey, 252
- Glory, 17, 26, 344
- Glory (Buffy the Vampire Slayer character), 68
- *G-Men from Hell,* 224–25
- G-Nome, 152
- *Go Boy 7,* 112
- Godcorp, 126
- Goddess of Truth, 401
- *Godlike,* 337
- *Godspell,* 349
- Gold, 233, 234
- Gold, Mike, 44
- Gold Key Comics, 383, 384
- Goldar, 236
- Goldberg, Evan, 158
- Golden, Christopher, 174
- Golden, Michael, 129
- Golden Age (1938-1954), **1–7,** 3 (ill.), 5 (ill.), 6 (ill.)
- Golden Archer, 168–69, 319
- Golden Arrow, 71
- Golden City, 111
- Golden Eagle, 365, 367
- Golden Girl, 82, 196, 340
- Golden Gorilla, 352
- Golden Lords, 78
- Goldin, James Grant, 14
- Goliath, 29, 30, 39, 166, 168, 333
- Gondry, Michael, 158
- *Good Girl Art Quarterly,* 138
- Goode, Matthew, 391
- Goodman, Martin, 9, 12, 133, 184, 186, 307, 321, 323
- Goodwin, Archie, 180, 199, 225, 226, 268, 269, 313
- "Goody Rickels," 252
- Goofy, 74, 148
- Googam Son of Goom, 177
- Gorby, Brad, 138
- Gordanians, 366
- Gorder, Jason, 280 (ill.)
- Gordon, Barbara, 12, 46–47, 54, 55–56
- Gordon, Commissioner James, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 53, 94–95
- Gorfinkel, Jordan B., 56
- Gorgeous Gal, 333
- Gorgon, 71, 194
- Gorilla Grodd, 325, 359
- Gorilla Man, 230, 254
- Goth, 367
- Gough, Alfred, 313
- Goulart, Ron, 4
- *The Governator,* 19
- Goyer, David S., 53, 54
- Grace, 111, 260
- Grace, Topher, 313
- Gracia, Marte, 114 (ill.)
- Graham, Billy, 62, 268
- Graine, Rex, 24
- Grandenetti, Jerry, 34
- Granger, Dawn, 167, 168
- Granger, Holly, 168
- Granite Man, 331
- Granny Goodness, 252, 253, 362
- Granov, Adi, 202
- Grant, Keron, 414
- Grant, Steven, 40, 111, 199, 242, 269, 301
- Grant, Vicki, 116, 117
- Grantray-Lawrence, 331, 332
- graphic novels, 15
- Gray, Dorian, 216 (ill.)
- Gray, Gabriel, 176
- Gray, Justin, 177, 331
- Gray, Michael, 93
- Gray-Cabey, Noah, 175 (ill.)
- Grayfist, 294
- Grayson, Bob, 229, 230
- Grayson, Charles, 283–84
- Grayson, Deborah, 197
- Grayson, Devin, 65
- Grayson, Dick, 49–54, 254–56, 281–83, 366, 419
- Grayson, Mark, 196, 197
- Grayson, Matthew, 229
- Grayson, Nolan, 197
- Great Book of the Vishanti, 121
- Great Defender, 355
- Great Lakes Alliance, 279
- Great Lakes Avengers, 40
- Great Maggeena, 45
- *The Great Women Superheroes* (Robbins), 339
- *The Greatest American Hero,* 76 (ill.), 78
- Greek Gods, 325
- Green, Dan, 386
- Green, Kevin, 377
- Green, Michael, 331
- Green, Seth, 68
- Green Arrow, **155–56,** 155 (ill.)
  - Black Canary, 57–58
  - Green Lantern, 159
  - introduced, 3
  - Justice League of America, 205, 206, 207
  - multiculturalism, 246, 247
  - Seven Soldiers of Victory, 208, 387
  - *Super Friends,* 324
  - Superboy, 328
  - Teen Titans, 365
- Green Flame/Fire, 206, 248
- Green Ghost, 197
- Green Goblin, 13, 41, 308, 309, 311, 312, 315, 361, 363, 373
- Green Goliath, 13, 180
- Green Hoods, 294
- Green Hornet, 2, 10, **156–58,** 157 (ill.), 245, 246, 338
- Green Lama, 63, 105
- Green Lantern, **158–61,** 159 (ill.), 160 (ill.)
  - Black Canary, 57
  - cartoons, 334
  - Daffy Duck, 148
  - enemies, 358, 359, 363
  - Flash, 144
  - Grundy, Solomon, 357
  - introduced, 3
  - Justice League of America, 205, 206, 207
  - Justice Society of America, 3, 208, 210, 320
  - Lobo, 220
  - movie, 18, 161
  - multiculturalism, 247, 248
  - reintroduced, 8
  - Spectre, 306–7
  - *Super Friends,* 325
  - Teen Titans, 367
- Green Lantern (rogue), 159
- *Green Lantern Corps,* 160
- *Green Lantern/Green Arrow,* 11–12, 45, 155 (ill.), 156, 159
- Green Mask, 2, 184
- Green Reaper, 279
- Green Terror, 294
- Greene, Jacob, 265
- Greene, Vernon, 294
- Grell, Mike, 156, 218
- Grenade, 378
- *Grendel,* 15, 110
- Grey, Jean, 341, 394, 395, 403, 405, 406, 408, 415
- Grey, Richard, 146
- Grey Gargoyle, 361, 370
- *Greyshirt,* 27, 28
- Grier, Pam, 364
- Griffin, Hawley, 215
- Grifter, 391, 392, 393
- Grim Reaper, 40
- Grimm, Ben, 9, 133, 135, 136, 249
- Grodd, 360, 362, 363
- Groener, Harry, 68
- Groening, Matt, 25, 45, 76
- Groot, 163
- Gross, Doctor Vincent, 377
- Gross National Product, 140
- Gruenwald, Mark, 24, 40, 84, 85, 169, 302, 320
- Gruffudd, Ioan, 135 (ill.), 136, 253
- Grummett, Tom, 226
- Grunberg, Greg, 175 (ill.)
- Grundy, Solomon, 158, 325, 357
- Grunge, 151, 152
- Guara, Ig, 67
- Guardian, 22, 23, 225, 252, 365
- *The Guardian and the Newsboy,* 225
- Guardian Project, 19
- Guardians, 336
- Guardians of Oa, 159, 160
- Guardians of the Galaxy, **161–63,** 253, 301
- Guardians of the Globe, 197
- Guardineer, Fred, 421
- Guggenheim, Marc, 412
- Guice, Jackson, 199, 353, 414
- Gulacy, Paul, 247
- Gulliver, Lemuel, 216
- *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift), 216
- Gunn, James, 25, 78
- Gurewitch, Nicholas, 25
- GURPS (General Universal Role-Playing System), 336
- Gustavson, Paul, 146

Guthrie, Paige, 411
Guthrie, Sam, 411, 412
Gutwirth, Maurice, 118
Guy Fawkes; or, The Gunpowder Treason (Ainsworth), 381
Guy Fawkes Night, 381
Gyllenhaal, Maggie, 53
Gypsy, 206, 248
Gypsy Moth, 314

H

Ha!, 279
Ha, Gene, 27, 37
Hadrian 7, 391
Haggard, H. Rider, 215
Hairies, 252
Hale, Gary, 241, 242
Haley, Jackie Earle, 390 (ill.), 391
Haley, Professor, 97
Hall, Carter, 170, 171
Hall, Don, 167, 168
Hall, Hank, 167, 168
Hall, Hector, 120
Hall, Kevin Peter, 78
Hallaway, Thomas, 146
Halo, 259, 260
Ham, 286
Hamill, Mark, 79, 145, 152, 307, 337, 338
Hamilton, Edmond, 54
Hammaglystwythkbrngxxaxolotl, 43
Hammer, Eric "Doc," 79
Hammer, Justin, 203
Hammer, M. C., 333
Hammett, Dashiell, 130
Hammond, Evey, 381, 382
Hammond, Hector, 159, 161, 359
Hammond, Jim, 184
Hancock, 18, 248
Handi-Man, 78
Handy, Ledby, 234
Haney, Bob, 31, 234, 235, 284, 365
Hangman, 4, 33, 358
Hanna, William, 165, 166
Hanna-Barbera heroes, **165–67,** 324, 332
Hannigan, Alyson, 67
Hannigan, Ed, 199, 248
Hansen, Gwenn, 266
Harada, Toyo, 383
Harbinger Foundation, 383, 384
H.A.R.D. Corps (Harbinger Active Resistance Division), 383
Hardcase, 16, 377
Hardin, Chad, 204
Hardware, 238, 291
Hardwire, 377
Hardy, Tom, 54
Hark, Anna, 265
Harlem Globetrotters, 166, 332
Harlequin, 158, 358, 365
Harmon, Steve, 254
Harper, Jim, 225
Harper, Roy, 155
Harris, Bill, 262
Harris, Neil Patrick, 312, 337
Harris, Rosemary, 312, 313
Harris, Xander, 67, 69
Hart, Bill, 104
Hart, John, 262
Hart, Kimberly, 235, 236
Hart, Melissa Joan, 219
Hartigan, Daniel, 203
Hartley, Justin, 156
Harvey, Alfred, 58, 59
Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law, 166, 167, 334
Harvey Comics, 58, 60, 140
Haspiel, Dean, 25, 79
Hasty Pudding, 116
Hate Monger, 360
Hathaway, Anne, 54, 96
Hauer, Rutger, 67
Haven, 163
Havoc, 336
Havok, 404, 414
The Hawk and the Dove, 11, 100, **167–68,** 365, 366
Hawke, Connor, 156
Hawkeye, 29, 39, 40, 41, 64, **168–69,** 278, 363, 419
Hawkgirl, 3, 71, 170, 171, 206, 207, 325, 326, 339
Hawkins, Sandy, 289, 290
Hawkins, Virgil, 238
Hawkman, **169–71,** 170 (ill.)
    enemies, 360
    Gentleman Ghost, 358
    Hawkgirl, 339
    Justice League of America, 8, 206
    Justice Society of America, 3, 208, 211
    multiculturalism, 246
    Super Friends, 325, 326
Hawk-Owl and Woody, 77
Hawkshadow, 296
Hawksmoor, Jack, 37
Hawkwoman, 206, 207
Hayes, Greta, 419
Hays, Robert, 203
Hazard, Johnny, 195
Head, Anthony Stewart, 67
Head, Edith, 192
Headbasher, 333
Headmen, 115
Heat Wave, 144, 359
Heath, Russ, 229
Hecate, 243
Heck, Don, 39, 64, 117 (ill.), 200, 202, 214
Hefti, Neal, 50
Heike, Mark, 137, 137 (ill.), 138, 139
Heike, Stephanie, 137 (ill.)
Heinberg, Allan, 402, 419
Helena, 95
Hell, 112
Hella the Goddess of Death, 371
Hellblazer, 16, 354
Hellboy, 110–11, 112, **171–74,** 171 (ill.), 172 (ill.), 173 (ill.), 190, 291
Hellcat, 40
Hellfire Club, 410, 411, 413
Hellions, 410, 413
Hellspawn, 189, 304
Hellstrom, Daimon, 353
Hembeck, Fred, 75–76
Hemsworth, Chris, 41, 373
Henry, Buck, 77
Henson, Jim, 369
Herbie, 136
Hercules, 40, 65, 87, 132, 176, 199, 228–29, 269, 332, 371
The Herculoids, 166
Herman, Jack, 336
Hernandez, Gilbert, 25
Hernandez, Jaime, 25
Hero, 262
Hero at Large, 77
Hero for Hire, 12
Hero for Life, 362
Hero High, 333
Hero Squared, 204
Hero Zero, 111
Herod, 152
Heroes, 18, **174–76,** 175 (ill.)
Heroes Anonymous, 77
Heroes by Gaslight, 337
Heroes for Hire, 29, **176–77,** 186, 199, 269
Heroes Reborn, 140
Heroes Return, 372
Heroes Unlimited, 336
Heron, Eddie, 90, 92
Hertzberg, George, 68, 69
Herz, Michael, 78
Hester, Phil, 30
Hex, 279
Heyer, Steve, 271
Hibbard, Everett E., 143
Hiddleston, Tom, 373
Higgins, Joe, 354
Higgins, Kyle, 368
Higgins, Michael, 271
High Evolutionary, 301, 361, 371
Highfather, 251, 253
Hill, Bart, 103
Hill, Fanny, 216
Him, 272, 301
Hirt, Al, 158
Hit Comics, 5
Hit Parader, 98
Hitch, Bryan, 37, 40
Hit-Girl, 280, 345
Hitler, Adolf, 4, 104, 196, 244, 248, 358
H.I.V.E., 366, 367
Hobgoblin, 363
Hodgson, William Hope, 216
Hogan, "Happy," 200, 202, 203
Hogan, Peter, 27
Hogun, 371
Hol, Katar, 170, 171
Hol, Shayera, 170, 171
Holliday Girls, 397
Hollow Men, 357
Holmes, Katie, 53
Holmes, Sherlock, 215

- Holy Terror, 63
- Holyoke, 66
- Homage Comics, 191
- Honey-Bun, 365
- Hong Kong, 280
- *Hong Kong Phooey,* 148, 166, 332
- Honor Guard, 34
- Hood, Gavin, 396
- The Hook, 112
- Hooten, Peter, 121
- Hopkins, Anthony, 373, 423
- Hoppy the Marvel Bunny, 73, 147
- Horde, 24
- Horn, Greg, 127 (ill.)
- Horne, Rick, 58
- Hornet, 203–4
- Hornung, E. W., 216
- The Horror, 112
- horror comics, 153
- Horton, Phineas T., 184, 186, 283
- Horus, Lord of Light, 25
- Hostess Twinkies, 14
- *Hot Wheels,* 81
- Hotsky Trotsky, 140, 359
- Hotz, Kyle, 183
- Hourman, 3, 8, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 285
- *House of M,* 395
- *House of Mystery,* 116
- Howard, Bryce Dallas, 313
- Howard, Robert E., 12
- Howard, Terrence, 203
- Howard the Duck, 148, 222
- Howell, Richard, 40, 76, 199, 269, 278
- Howler, 332
- Howlett, James, 395
- H'ronmeer, 228
- Hudlin, Reginald, 62
- Hudnall, James D., 377
- Hudson, Heather McNeil, 22
- Hudson, James MacDonald, 22
- Hueston, Ray, 79
- Huffman, Alaina, 58
- Hughes, Adam, 109 (ill.), 111, 129, 152 (ill.)
- Hughes, Finola, 411
- Hughes, Howard, 200
- Hughes, Richard E., 62, 74
- Hughes, Steven, 354
- Hughes, Ted, 285
- The Hulk, **177–84,** 177 (ill.), 179 (ill.), 181 (ill.). *See also* The Incredible Hulk
  - Cage, Luke, 269
  - cartoons, 333, 334
  - Defenders, 114
  - enemies, 361
  - Heroes for Hire, 176
  - introduced, 9
  - Iron Fist, 199
  - lampooned in *Radioactive Man,* 45
  - Man Mountain, 193
  - Marvel Man, 229
  - movie, 18
  - *Saturday Night Live* skit, 78
  - Spider-Man, 308
  - on TV, 10
- Hulkling, 249, 419
- Human Bomb, 3, 146, 147
- Human Fly Bandits, 170
- Human Icicle, 116
- Human Robot, 230, 285
- Human Top, 29, 196
- The Human Torch, **184–86,** 185 (ill.)
  - *All-Winners Comics,* 195
  - android, 283, 284
  - Avengers, 38
  - Captain America, 82
  - communism, 6
  - Fantastic Four, 9, 133–36
  - Heroes for Hire, 176
  - Inhumans, 194
  - introduced, 3
  - invaders, 196
  - Japanese, 244
  - Planetary, 265
  - Spider-Man, 308, 309
  - Sub-Mariner, 321, 322, 323
- Humbug, 177
- Hunchback of Hollywood, 81
- *The Hunger Dogs,* 213, 252
- Hunkel, Ma, 73, 284, 338
- Hunt, Jeff, 314
- Hunt, Jerry, 314
- Hunter, Holly, 191
- Hunter, Timothy, 264, 386
- The Huntress, 47, 56, 95, **186–87,** 187 (ill.), 207, 209, 342, 358
- Huntsman, 226
- Hurricane, 132
- Hurricane Diane, 98
- Hurt, John, 174, 382
- Hurt, William, 184
- Hurwitz, Harry, 77
- Husk, 411, 412
- Huston, Charlie, 243
- Huxley, Aldous, 382
- Hyde, Edward, 215
- Hyde Pierce, David, 174
- Hydra, 313
- H.Y.D.R.A., 84
- Hydroman, 3
- Hyperion, 319, 320
- Hyram Fly, 148

I

- *I Am Coyote,* 126
- *I Love Lucy,* 348
- Ibac, 92
- Ibis the Invincible, 3, 71, 352
- Icarus, 414
- Ice, 206, 227, 343
- Ice-Maiden, 206
- Iceman, 65, 115, 403, 414
- I-Ching, 247, 398
- Icicle, 358
- Icon, 238, 248
- *Identity Crisis,* 130, 142
- IDW Publishing, 17, 287
- Ifans, Rhys, 313
- Iger, Jerry, 34, 66, 316
- Igle, Jamal, 177, 200
- Igoo, 166
- Ikaris, 131
- Illuminati, 183, 324
- Image Comics, 16, 17, 44, 45, 128, 151, 302, 377, 392
- Image Comics heroes, **189–91**
- Immonen, Stuart, 40
- Immortal, 197
- Immortus, 40, 244, 278
- Imperial Guard, 302
- Imperiex, 363
- Impossibles, 165
- Impulse, 207, 367, 419
- *In Living Color,* 76, 78
- Incredible Crude Oil Monster, 326
- *The Incredible Hulk,* 13, 14, 177, 178, 296. *See also* The Hulk
- *The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction,* 337
- *The Incredible Hulk* (movie), 18, 184
- *The Incredible Hunk,* 75
- The Incredibles, 18, 78, **191–93,** 192 (ill.)
- India Rubber Man, 266
- Indigo, 24, 260
- Infantino, Carmine
  - Adam Strange, 21
  - Archie Comics, 33
  - Batman, 50
  - Black Canary, 57
  - Bronze Age, 13–14
  - DC art director, 11
  - Deadman, 112
  - "Dial 'H' for Hero," 117 (ill.)
  - Elongated Man, 130
  - Flash, 7, 143, 143 (ill.), 144
  - Inferior Five, 193
  - Justice Society of America, 209
  - multiculturalism, 246
  - New Gods, 251
  - Nova, 256
  - Superman, 349
- The Inferior Five, 74, **193–94**
- Inferno, 33
- *The Infinite Crisis,* 234, 329, 402
- Infinity Inc., 210
- Infinity Man, 252
- *Infra-Man,* 77
- *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* (Cervantes), 215
- Inhumans, 61, 134, **194–95,** 199, 278
- Injustice Gang of the World, 358
- Injustice Society, 209
- Insignis, 279
- International Operations (I.O.), 151
- interracial romances, 248
- Invaders, **195–96,** 195 (ill.)
- The Invaders, 186, 356
- Invincible, 118, 191, **196–98,** 197 (ill.)
- Invisible Boy, 78
- Invisible Girl, 9, 133–36, 194, 323, 324, 332, 341, 343
- Invisible Irving, 140

Invisible Kid, 217
Invisible Man, 71
The Invisible Man (Wells), 215, 216 (ill.)
Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, 340
Invisible Woman, 136, 192, 265, 271, 324, 343
The Invisibles, 386
Ipkiss, Stanley, 111, 232
IQ Gang, 170
Ireland, 279
Iron Fist, 12, 176, 177, **198–200**, 248, 269, 270, 362
Iron Lad, 285, 419
Iron Maiden, 374
Iron Man, **200–203**, 201 (ill.)
    animated film, 285
    Avengers, 38, 41, 178
    Black Knight, 60
    Captain America, 82
    cartoons, 10, 334
    enemies, 361
    Guardians of the Galaxy, 163
    Hawkeye, 168, 169
    Hulk, 183
    movies, 18, 203
    New Avengers, 122
    Romanoff, Natasha, 342
    Vietnam War, 246
Iron Skull, 2
Irons, John Henry, 248
Ironside, Michael, 253
Irredeemable, **203–4**
Irvin, Britt, 321
Isaacs, Jason, 161
Isabella, Tony, 199, 269
Isherwood, Geoff, 199, 269
Isis, 332, 342
Ivan the Terrible, 81
Ivana, 151
Ivie, Larry, 374
I.W. Comics, 66

J

Jack B. Quick, Boy Inventor, 27
Jack Cole and Plastic Man: Forms Stretched to Their Limits (Spiegelman and Kidd), 267
Jack Frost, 196
Jackal, 310
Jack-in-the-Box, 34
Jackman, Hugh, 396, 396 (ill.)
Jackson, Lee, 281
Jackson, Samuel L., 18, 41, 192, 203, 248, 319
Jackson, Steve, 336
Jade, 210, 260
Jade Giant, 180, 182
Jagga the Space Raider, 359
Jaguar, 10, 32, 33
Jai, Michael, 189, 304
Jakarta the Dust Devil, 21
James, Mary, 35
James, Theodore, 279
James Bond films, 192
Jameson, J. Jonah, 274, 308, 309, 311, 312
Jameson, John Jonah, Sr., 311
Jan and Jayce, 165
Jane, Thomas, 275
Janin, Mikel, 386
Janni, 216
Janson, Klaus, 52, 107
Janus, John, 374
Japanese, 185, 244, 247
"Japs," 244
Java, 234–35
Jayna, 324, 327
Jekyll, Dr. Henry, 215
Jenkins, Paul, 183, 292
Jennings, Professor, 373
Jensen, Dennis, 117 (ill.)
Jericho, 293, 366, 367
Jester, 105, 146
Jester's League of America, 75
Jesus Christ, 37, 75, 264
Jetgirl, 138
Jetstream, 79
Jewish Americans, 249
Jewish Hero Corps, 248
Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.S., 333
Jimenez, Phil, 401
Jinx, 344
Joan of Arc, 353
Jock, 104
Johansson, Scarlet, 41, 65, 203, 319
Johns, Geoff
    Aquaman, 31
    Avengers, 40
    DC comics chief creative officer, 18
    Flash, 145
    Green Lantern, 161
    Justice League of America, 207
    Justice Society of America, 210, 211
    Nightwing, 256
    role-playing games, 337
    Smallville, 219
    Superman, 350
    Teen Titans, 367
    Young Justice, 419
Johnson, Aaron, 280, 345 (ill.)
Johnson, Arte, 253
Johnson, Drew, 401
Johnson, Jenny, 79
Johnson, Mark Steven, 155
Johnson, Mike, 331
Johnson, Tyrone, 248
Johnston, Joe, 86, 287
Johnstone, Bill, 294
Johnstone, Paul, 295–96
Joker
    appearance of, 358
    Batgirl, 343, 363
    Gordon, Barbara, 47, 55
    Hamill, Mark, 337
    introduction of, 49
    in newspaper comics, 359
    Nicholson, Jack, 53
    Robin the Boy Wonder, 52, 282, 283, 363
    Robinson, Jerry, 5
    Romero, Cesar, 360
    Royal Flush Gang, 326
    Showcase, 362, 362 (ill.)
    Wonder Woman, 401
Jolie, Angelina, 344
Jolly Green Giant, 75, 180
Jonathan (Buffy the Vampire Slayer character), 69
Jones, Angelica, 253
Jones, Casey, 369
Jones, Doug, 174, 300
Jones, Gerard, 227, 377
Jones, J. G., 64 (ill.), 65, 229
Jones, Jessica, 270
Jones, Jimbo, 45
Jones, John, 7, 226, 246
Jones, Julianna, 271
Jones, Kelley, 302
Jones, Mickey, 78
Jones, Phoenix, 279
Jones, Rick (Captain America character), 82, 84
Jones, Rick (Captain Marvel character), 89, 90
Jones, Rick (Hulk character), 178, 180
Jones, U.S., 4, 354–55
Jones, Yankee Doodle, 355
Jonni Future, 27
Jonny Quest, 79
J'onzz, J'onn, 7, 226–28
J'onzz, Ma'alefa'ak, 228
Jordan, Hal, 159, 160, 161, 300, 306–7
Jor-El, 329, 346, 348
Jor-L, 346
Jory, Victor, 294
Jose, Ruy, 67
Joto, 367
Joyce, Barbara, 56, 187
Jubilee, 395
Judd, Eugene Milton, 23
Judge Dredd, 302, 337
Judge Jury, 25
Judomaster, 10, 87, 98, 361
Juggernaut, 361, 404, 411
Jughead, 10, 74
Jungle Action, 61 (ill.), 62
Jungle Beasts of Jupiter, 300
Jungle Comics, 338
Jungle Girls, 138
Junko, Melvin, 78
Junkyard, 333
Jupiter, Loren, 365
Jurgens, Dan, 67, 156, 199, 227, 372
Juspeczyk, Laurie, 390
Justice, 229, 253, 254, 279
Justice League, 19 (ill.)
Justice League of America, **205–7**, 206 (ill.)
    Adam Strange, 22
    Atom, 36
    Avengers, 38, 39
    Batman, 259

  Black Canary, 57
  Captain Atom, 88
  cartoons, 334
  Condorilla, 352
  Dr. Fate, 352
  enemies, 360, 363
  Fantastic Four, 9
  Firestorm, 142
  Freedom Fighters, 146
  Gordon, Barbara, 12
  Green Arrow, 155, 156
  Green Lantern, 160
  Hawkman, 170
  Huntress, 187
  introduced, 8
  Martian Manhunter, 227
  Metamorpho, 235
  multiculturalism, 246
  Red Tornado, 284
  on TV, 14
  Wonder Woman, 398, 399, 402
  Young Justice, 419
  Zatanna, 353, 421
Justice League Unlimited, 17
Justice Machine Annual, 129
Justice Society of America, **207–11**, 208 (ill.)
  Birds of Prey, 55
  Black Canary, 57
  Brainwave, 357
  Doctor Fate, 119–20
  Earth-Two, 205–6
  enemies, 358
  Flash, 144
  Red Tornado, 284
  Sandman, 289–90, 385
  Spectre, 306
  Starman, 320
  Supergirl, 331
  Thunder, Johnny, 352
  Wonder Woman, 398, 399
The Justice Society Returns, 210
Justifiers, 336
Justina, 61
juvenile delinquency, 6

K

Kahl, Milt, 191
Kahn, Jenette, 14, 399
K'ai, 180
Kaidan, 204
Kal-El, 346
Kaler, David, 87
Kalibak, 252, 253, 326, 362
Kal-L, 346
Kalmaku, Thomas "Pieface," 159
Kaluta, Michael, 48 (ill.), 287, 293 (ill.), 295
Kamandi, 11
Kamandi, The Last Boy on Earth, 252
Kaminski, Len, 254
Kancer, 363
Kandor, 256
Kane, Betty, 54
Kane, Bob
  Batman, 48
  Batwoman, 54
  Catwoman, 94
  Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse, 77, 147
  Robin the Boy Wonder, 3, 281
  Underdog, 331
  Zorro, 422
Kane, Gil
  Atom, 35, 35 (ill.)
  Black Panther, 61 (ill.)
  Captain Action, 80
  Captain Marvel, 89
  Ghost Rider, 153 (ill.)
  Giant-Size Defenders, 115 (ill.)
  Green Lantern, 159, 159 (ill.)
  The Hawk and the Dove, 167
  Iron Fist, 198
  Spider Man, 309
  T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, 374
  Warlock, Adam, 301
Kane, Jake, 55
Kane, Joshua, 281
Kane, Kate, 55, 249
Kane, Kathy, 50, 54, 341
Kang the Conqueror, 40, 361, 419
Kanigher, Robert
  Black Canary, 57
  Flash, 7, 143, 144
  Justice Society of America, 209
  Metal Man, 233, 234
  multiculturalism, 249
  Silent Knight, 61
  Wonder Woman, 398
Kanis-Biz, 221
Kanjar Ro, 360
Kapatelis, Cassie, 399
Kapatelis, Julia, 399
Kaplan, Billy, 420
Kara In-Ze, 330
Kara Zor-El, 329, 331
Karate, 148, 332
Karillion, 391
Karloff, Boris, 178, 357
Karma, 412, 414
Karnak, 194
Kashdan, George, 365
Katana, 259, 260
Kato, 157, 245, 246
Kato, Mulan, 158
Katt, William, 76 (ill.)
The Katzenjammer Kids, 1
Kaufman, Lloyd, 78
Kavalier, Joe, 112
Ka-Zar, 321
Keane, Ms., 272
Kearny, 45
Keaton, Michael, 52–53
Keeper, Mr., 5
Keepers, 151
Keith, Sam, 290
Kellaway, Lt., 232
Kelley, David E., 402
Kelly, Carrie, 283
Kelly, Joe, 165, 166, 334
Kennedy, Jamie, 78
Kennedy, John F., 348
Kenny, Tom, 86, 267
Kent, Brian, 61
Kent, Chris, 256
Kent, Clark, 12, 256, 327–29, 346, 349, 350. See also Superman
Kent, Conner, 329, 419
Kent, Jonathan, 327, 347, 349
Kent, Martha, 327, 347, 349
Kent, Police Chief, 71
Kent, Susan, 71
Keown, Dale, 190
Kerby, George, 131
Kerby, Marion, 131
Kesel, Barbara, 167
Kesel, Karl, 167
Ketch, Danny, 154
Key, 360
Khan, Shiwan, 245
Kherubim, 391, 393
Kho, Kevin, 302
Khonshu, 242
Khrushchev, Nikita, 200
Kick-Ass, 345, 345 (ill.)
Kid Action, 81
Kid Commandos, 196
Kid Eternity, 5, 386
Kid Flash, 144, 145, 365, 366, 367, 368, 419
Kid Komics, 82, 185
Kid Miracleman, 239, 240
Kid Nova, 257
Kid Vicious, 25
"Kid Who Collected Spider-Man," 310
Kidd, Chip, 25, 267
Kidder, Margot, 78
Kieth, Sam, 190
Kilgrave the Purple Man, 105
Kill Bill: Vol. 1, 344
Killer Croc, 52, 363
Killer Frost, 141
Killer Moth, 46
Kilowatt, 367
Kilowog, 160, 161
"Kimota!," 239
King, Chris, 116
King, William, 193
King Arthur and the Round Table, 60, 61
King James I, 381
King Kandy, 116
King Kull, 92
King Midas, 361
King Shark, 364
King Solomon's Frog, 62
King Solomon's Mines (Haggard), 215
King Tut, 360
King Zandor, 166
King Jones, Cissie, 419
Kingpin, 107, 108, 109, 128, 308, 314, 361, 362
Kinnear, Greg, 110, 158
Kinney, Laura, 396
Kirby: Genesis, **213–14**
Kirby, Jack
  Allred, Mike, 224
  Archie Comics, 33

  The Authority, 37
  Avengers, 38
  Black Panther, 61, 62
  Blue Bolt, 300
  Captain America, 81, 82, 84, 354
  Captain Victory and the Galactic Rangers, 15
  Challengers of the Unknown, 96, 97
  Darkseid, 141, 361–62
  Destroyer Duck, 126, 148
  The Double Life of Private Strong, 355
  Elektro, 285
  Eternals, 131–32
  Fantastic Four, 9, 134, 134 (ill.), 135, 364 (ill.)
  Fighting America, 355
  Fighting American, 74, 139, 139 (ill.), 140
  Fighting American, 6
  first black superhero, 10
  Fourth World, 326
  Groot, 163
  Him, 301
  Hulk, 177, 178, 180
  Human Torch, 186
  Inhumans, 194
  Iron Man, 200
  Kirby: Genesis, 213–14
  Klarion the Witchboy, 211
  lampooned in *Radioactive Man*, 45
  Machine Man, 285
  Manhunter, 225
  Marvel Boy, 228
  Mignola, Mike, 173
  moves to DC Comics, then back to Marvel, 11
  multiculturalism, 246, 249
  New Gods, 228, 251–53, 252 (ill.)
  occult, 353
  OMAC: One Man Army Corps, 302
  Plastic Man, 5
  Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, 277
  Sandman, 289, 385
  Sentry, 292
  Shield, 32–33
  Silver Surfer, 298, 299
  Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen, 259
  "The Man in the Ant Hill!," 28, 29
  Thor, 370, 370 (ill.), 371, 373
  Vision, 284
  X-Men, 403, 404
  Young Romance, 341
Kirbyverse, 213–14
Kirk, Paul, 225, 226
Kirk, Valencia, 138
Kirkman, Robert, 30, 196–97
Kit, 262
Kitaen, Priscilla, 391
Kitchen Sink Press, 224, 318
Kitt, Eartha, 95
Kitten, 3, 138, 340, 374
Klarion the Witchboy, 211
Kloves, Steve, 313
Knight, 245
Knight, David, 321
Knight, Jack, 321
Knight, Misty, 176
Knight, Sandra, 146
Knight, Theodore "Ted," 320, 321
Knockabout Comics, 216
Kobalt, 238
Kochalka, James, 25
Koepp, David, 312, 313
Kofi, 271
Kohler, Count, 44
Kole, 366
Kolins, Scott, 176, 199
Kon-El, 329, 367, 419
Konjar Ro, 22
Kookie Quartet, 193
Kord, Ted, 66–67
Korean War, 82
Korvac, Michael, 162
Kraft, David Anthony, 115
Kraken, 112
Kramer, Clare, 68
Krang, 323, 369
Krank, Ray, 153
Krause, Peter, 203
"Krauts," 244
Kraven the Hunter, 308, 315, 361
Kravinoff, Sasha, 315
Kree, 88, 302, 419
Kree Empire, 194, 195
Kree-Skrull War, 169
Kremer, Warren, 60
Kricfalusi, John, 334
Krigstein, Jacob, 37
Kring, Tim, 18, 174
The Kroft Supershow, 342
Kronus, 204
Krueger, Jim, 63, 104, 196
Krul, JT, 88, 156
Krypto, 327, 348
Krypton, 325, 329, 330, 346
Kryptonite, 328
Ku Klux Klan, 62, 359
Kubert, Adam, 407
Kubert, Joe, 143, 170, 170 (ill.), 209, 249
Kung, Lei, 199
kung fu, 12, 198
K'un L'un, 177, 198, 199
Kurosawa, Akira, 161
Kurt Busiek's Astro City, 149, 190, 285, 391. See *also* Astro City
Kurtzman, Harvey, 24
Kuzui, Fran Rubel, 70
Kuzui, Kaz, 70
Kwan, Trini, 235, 236
Kyle, Craig, 417
Kyle, Helena, 56
Kyle, Selina, 54, 94–96, 186, 344
Kylun the Barbarian, 409

L

La Rocque, Rod, 294
Labat, Yancey, 163
Lady Blackhawk, 56
Lady Death, 16–17, 344, 354
Lady Dorma, 323
Lady Fairplay, 340, 354
Lady Killer, 377
Lady Lark, 319
Lady Liberty, 193, 356
Lady Luck, 3, 316, 338
Lady Luger, 138
Lady Rawhide, 423
Lady Robotika, 345
Lady Satan, 340
Lady Shiva, 56, 247
Laird, Peter, 75, 336, 368, 369
Lamont, 44
LaMorte, Robia, 68
Lampert, Harry, 143
Lance, Dinah, 55, 58
Lance, Larry, 57
Land, Greg, 255 (ill.)
Landau, Juliet, 68
Lane, Bobby, 151
Lane, Chuck, 146
Lane, Lois, 50, 77–78, 156, 256, 328, 347, 350, 351
Lane, Margo, 294
Lang, Cassie, 30, 420
Lang, Lana, 327, 347
Lang, Scott, 29–30, 176, 199, 269
Langkowski, Walter, 23
Lanning, Andy, 37, 163, 177, 257, 302, 353
Lara, 346, 348
LaRocque, Greg, 199, 269
Larroca, Salvador, 202
Larsen, Erik, 16, 116, 189, 190, 257, 290–91, 291 (ill.), 357
Larter, Ali, 175 (ill.), 176
Lash Lightning, 71
Last Boy on Earth, 11
The Last of the Mohicans (Cooper), 216
Late Bronze Age (1980-1984), **14–15**
Latinos, 248
Lavagirl in 3-D, 18
Lawlor, Chase, 226
Law's Legionnaires, 208
Lawton, Sylvia, 340
Layton, Bob, 199, 202, 269, 414
Le Fay, Mordred, 60
Le Fay, Morgan, 60, 314, 401
Leach, Garry, 239, 240 (ill.)
Leachman, Cloris, 152
Lead, 234
Leader, 180, 182, 361
Leading Comics, 155
League of Assassins, 55, 113, 360
League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, 26, 28, **215–16**, 216 (ill.)
Leapfrog, 105
Leary, Denis, 313
Leather, Bret, 265

Leatner, John, 265
Leatner, William, 265
LeBeau, Remy, 406
Ledger, Heath, 53, 54 (ill.), 363
Lee, Ang, 181 (ill.), 183, 184
Lee, Bruce, 157, 246
Lee, Jae, 292
Lee, James Kyson, 175 (ill.)
Lee, Jason, 192, 235, 236
Lee, Jim
    Alpha Flight, 23
    Batman, 53
    DC Comics, 18
    Gen 13, 151
    Image Comics, 16
    Justice League of America, 19 (ill.), 207
    Marvel success, 189, 190
    rejected superheroes, 76
    role-playing games, 337
    WildC.A.T.S., 392, 392 (ill.)
    WildStorm, 191, 392–93
    Wonder Woman, 402
    X-Men, 406
Lee, Jubilation (Jubilee), 410
Lee, Linda, 329
Lee, Stan
    Avengers, 38, 39
    Black Knight, 60
    Black Panther, 61
    Black Widow, 64
    BOOM! Studios, 204
    Captain America, 82, 84
    Daredevil (movie), 108
    Destroyer, 63, 355
    Doctor Strange, 121
    Elektro, 285
    Fantastic Four, 9, 133, 134, 135, 136
    first black superhero, 10
    Groot, 163
    Him, 301
    Hulk, 177–78, 180, 183
    Human Torch, 186
    Inhumans, 194
    Iron Man, 200, 202
    lampooned in *Radioactive Man*, 45
    Marvel Boy, 229
    multiculturalism, 246
    Namor, 323
    parody of, 25
    Punisher, 273
    Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, 277
    Sentry, 292
    She-Hulk, 296
    Silver Surfer, 298, 299
    Spider-Man, 12, 307, 309, 310
    Spider-Woman, 313
    Stripperella, 334
    "The Man in the Ant Hill!," 28, 29
    Thor, 370, 371, 373
    Who Wants to Be a Superhero?, 280
    Witness, 196
    X-Men, 403, 404
Leech, 413
Leeke, Mike, 129
Legacy Virus, 409
Legend, 171
The Legend of Zorro, 423, 423 (ill.)
Legends of the DC Universe, 46 (ill.)
Legends of the Super-Heroes, 187
L.E.G.I.O.N. (Licensed Extra-Governmental Interstellar Operatives Network), 219, 221
Legion of Doom, 325, 363
Legion of Super-Heroes, 8, 116, **217–19**, 218 (ill.), 252, 300, 328, 330, 348, 360
Legion of Super-Villains, 217, 360
Legionary, 245
Lei Kung the Thunderer, 198
Lemaris, Lois, 348
Lemire, Jeff, 386
Lenk, Tom, 69
Leno, Jay, 334
Leon, John Paul, 97 (ill.), 238
Leonardo, 368
Leonardo da Vinci, 48
Leterrier, Louis, 184
Lethem, Jonathan, 302
Lev Gleason Publications, 2, 103, 104, 265
Levitz, Paul, 18, 99, 186, 218, 219
Levram, 75
Levy, Edward, 98
Liberator, 354
Liberty Belle, 4, 210, 339, 355
Liberty Legion, 196
The Liberty Project, 126
Lieber, Larry, 200, 370
Liebowitz, Jack, 2, 9, 133, 208
Liefeld, Rob
    America's Best Comic heroes, 26
    Awesome Entertainment, 191
    "bad girl" art, 17
    Captain America, 140
    Deadpool, 113
    The Hawk and the Dove, 168
    Image Comics, 16
    Marvel success, 189, 190
    Shadow, 296
    Spawn, 303
    X Men: New Mutants, 413
    X-Men: X-Force/X-Statix, 415, 416
Life, 279
Light, 217
Lightning, 373, 374
Lightning Boy/Lad, 8, 217, 218, 219
Lightning Girl, 71
Lightning Lass, 217
Lightning Lord, 360
Lightray, 251
Lightspeed, 19, 270
Lignante, Bill, 262
L'il Lobo, 222
Lilith, 365, 367
Limbo, 413
Lincoln, Abraham, 197
Lincoln, Ray, 146
Lindsay, John, 156
Lionfang, 362
Lion-Mane, 170
Liquid!, 280 (ill.)
Liquifier, 296
Lisa the Conjurer, 45
Little Dot, 60
Little Sardine, 31
Little Wise Guys, 104
Liu, Lucy, 344
Live Wire, 219
Lively, Blake, 161
Liverwurst, Lucy, 140
Living Eraser, 29
Living Legends, 337
Living Vampire, 362
Lizard, 308, 313, 361
Lizewski, Dave, 280
Lloyd, David, 381, 382
Llyra, 324
Lobdell, Scott, 329, 368, 410
Lobo, **219–22**, 304
Loch Ness monster, 252
Lockheed, 408
Lockjaw, 194
Lockley, Jake, 242
Loeb, Jeph, 53, 96, 319, 331, 350
Loeb, Lisa, 312
"Logan," 394, 395, 405
Logan, Thomas, 395
Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman (TV), 17
Loki, 38, 361, 370, 371, 373
London Nights, 17
Lone, 112
Lone Ranger, 80, 157, 244, 265
Long Tom, 117
Longbow Hunters, 156
Longshot, 415, 416
Looker, 260
Looney Leo, 149
Looter, 308
Lopez, José Luis Garcia, 113, 113 (ill.), 326
Lopez, Maya, 169
Lora, 346
Lord, Maxwell, 67, 206
Lord Blackstock, 265
Lord Chaos, 367
Lord Emp, 391
Lord Ghaur, 132
Lord Hellspont, 391
Lord Weterlackus, 44
Lord Zedd, 236
Loring, Jean, 36, 130
Lothar, 244, 333, 352
Lothos, 67
Louie the Lilac, 360
Love Tales, 185
Lowe, Chad, 219
Lowe, Rob, 78
Lucas, 268
Lucas, George, 134, 148, 253
Lucas, Josh, 183

Luke Cage, 12, 247, 268, 268 (ill.)
Lumpkin, Willie, 136
Luna, 278
Lundgren, Dolph, 275
Lutefisk, Lannier, 44
Luthor, Lex, 217, 325, 326, 328, 328 (ill.), 329, 347, 348, 349, 351, 357, 360, 363
Lyla, 298
Lynch, John, 151, 152
Lynne, Monica, 62
Lyons, David, 18

M

M, 410, 412, 414
M-11 the Human Robot, 230, 254
Maas, Stephanie, 281
MacDonald, J. Fred, 245
Mace, 362
The Machine, 16, 111
Machine Man, 285
Macht, Gabriel, 319
Macy, William H., 78, 110
Mad Hatter, 358
MAD Magazine, 24, 73, 74, 76
Mad Mod, 360, 365
Mad Thinker, 186
Madame Masque, 202
Madame Rouge, 123
Madame Satan, 352
Madame Web, 315
Madame Xanadu, 15, 386
Madison, Ivory, 187
Madison, Julie, 50
Madman, 76, 110, **223–25**, 224 (ill.)
Madmen, 361
Madripoor, 395
Madrox, Jamie, 414
Madsen, Michael, 161
Maestro, 182
Magda, 277
Mage, 15, 190
Mageddon, 363
Maggia, 200
Maggie Q, 345
Maggin, Elliot S!, 349
Maggot, 406
Magicman, 10
Magik, 412, 414
Magma, 413, 414
Magnet Man, 331
Magneto, 39, 115, 247, 249, 277, 278, 361, 403, 404, 406, 413, 415 (ill.)
The Magnificent Seven, 161
Magno the Magnetic Man, 3, 357, 358
Magnus, 277
Magnus, Robot Fighter, 10, 16, 383, 384
Magnus, Will, 233, 234
Maguire, Kevin, 206, 207
Maguire, Tobey, 312, 312 (ill.), 313
Magus, 301
Mahnke, Doug, 161, 232
Mailer, Norman, 290
Main Men and the Several Scum-Buckets, 220
Maizen, Craig, 78
Major Force, 88
Major Liberty, 354
Major Victory, 163, 253, 354, 356
Makkari, 132
Mako, 369
Malebolgia, 303–4
Maleev, Alex, 109, 243
Malefic, 228
Malibu Comics, 16, 377
Malice, 136, 343
Malverne, Dick, 329
Man in Black Called Fate, 263
Man Mountain, 193
Man of Bronze, 117
The Man of Steel, 18, 219
Man of Two Worlds: My Life in Science Fiction and Comics (Schwartz), 7
Man of War, 354
Man without Fear, 127
Manapul, Francis, 145
Man-Bat, 51, 362
Man-Beast, 301
Mandarin, 194, 200, 246, 361
Mandrake, Tom, **141**, 228, 306
Mandrake the Magician, 244, 261, 262, 333, 352, 421
Maneely, Joe, 60
Mangog, 371
Manhattan Guardian, 211
Manhunter, **225–26**
Manhunter *(Police Comics)*, 146
Manhunter from Mars, 7
Manitou Dawn, 248
Manitou Raven, 207, 248, 326
Manley, Mike, 254
Mann, Jon “Iron,” 234
Manning, Luther, 302
Manowar, 354
Manta and Moray, 332
Man-Thing, 12
Mantis, 40, 163, 247, 252
Mantlo, Bill, 16, 40, 149, 162, 182, 248
Mantra, 377, 378
Man Wolf, 362
The Many Worlds of Tesla Strong, 27, 27 (ill.)
March, Guillem, 96
Marcoux, George, 73
Marcus, 244
The Mark of Zorro, 422
Marko, Cain, 404
Markstein, Don, 338
Marlow, Keen, 63–64
Marlowe, Jacob, 391
Marrina, 23
Marrow, 406
Mars, 358, 359, 398
Marsters, James, 68, 219
Marston, William Moulton, 339, 397, 398
Marten, Sasha, 168
martial arts, 43, 198
Martian Man, 197
Martian Manhunter, 7, 8, 205, 206, 207, **226–28**, 227 (ill.), 246, 393, 419
Martin, Don, 10, 74
Martin, Fingers, 241
Martin, George R. R., 25, 336
Martinbrough, Shawn, 97 (ill.)
Martinex, 161, 162, 301
Martyr, 163
Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics (Daniels), 13, 127
Marvel, Mary. *See* Mary Marvel
Marvel Boy, 162, **228–30**, 253, 254
Marvel Bunny, 230
Marvel Comics
    alternative superheroes, 25
    communism, 6
    first comic book, 3
    Human Torch, 184
    Ms. Marvel, 243–44
    publishes without CCA approval, 12
    surpasses DC Comics as industry leader, 11
    vs. DC Comics during Bronze Age, 13–14
Marvel family, 92, 231, 332–33
Marvel Feature, 181
Marvel Girl, 363, 403, 414
Marvel Knights, 62, 122, 229, 292
Marvel Man, 229
Marvel Mystery Comics, 4, 82, 185, 284
Marvel Premiere, 121, 198
The Marvel Super-Heroes, 331, 336
Marvel Universe RPG, 337
Marvel vs. Capcom 2: A New Age of Heroes, 337
Mar-Vell, 301
Marvelman, 93, 239
Marvex the Super-Robot, 285
Marvin, 324
Mary Marvel, 3, 91, 92, **230–31**, 230 (ill.), 339
The Mary Tyler Moore Show, 342
The Mask, 111, 222, **231–33**, 231 (ill.), 232 (ill.)
    movie, 232–33, 232 (ill.)
The Mask of Zorro, 48, 423
The Masked Man, 126
Masked Marvel, 184
Masked Swastika, 193
Mason, Joan, 66
Mason, Rex, 234–35
Masquerade, 63
Mass Master, 270
Massacre, 363
Massara, Jim, 45
Master, 67, 116
Master Comics, 70, 71
Master Legend, 279
Master Man, 70, 196
Master of Kung Fu, 12, 12 (ill.), 247
Master of the Mystic Arts, 361
Master of the World, 23

Master Planner, 308
Masters, Alicia, 135, 136
Masters of Evil, 39
Masterson, Eric, 371–72
Masterville, 236
Masuli, Pat, 86
Matrix, 125, 330
The Matrix series, 344
Matsura, Gwen, 152
Matter-Eater Lad, 217
Matter-Master, 170
Maude, 342
Maul, 391
Maurer, Norman, 104
Maxima, 88
Maxi-Man, 377
Maximoff, Pietro, 277, 414
Maximoff, Thomas, 278
Maximoff, Wanda, 277–78
Maximoff, William, 278
Maximum, 26
Maximus the Mad, 194
The Maxx, 190
Mayer, Robert, 24
Mayer, Sheldon, 73, 208, 284
Mayflower, 356
Mayhem, 232
Mazin, Craig, 79
'Mazing Man, 75
Mazoujian, Chuck, 316
Mazzucchelli, David, 95, 107, 108
McAvoy, James, 415 (ill.)
McCann, Chuck, 77
McCartney, Paul, 200
McCoy, Hank, 403
McCoy, Wilson, 262
McCracken, Craig, 166, 272
McCulley, Johnston, 422
McCulloch, Christopher, 79
McDaniel, Scott, 239
McDowell, Roddy, 360
McDowell, Scotty, 314
McDuffie, Dwayne, 207, 237, 271
McFad, Koppy, 73
McFarlane, Todd
    Hulk, 182
    Image Comics, 16
    lampooned in *Radioactive Man*, 45
    Marvel success, 189
    Miracleman, 240–41
    Sandman, 290
    Spawn, 303, 304, 305, 334
    Spider-Man, 310
McFarlane Toys, 189, 304
McGee, Christina, 145
McGregor, Don, 62, 125, 191, 423
McKean, Dave, 385
McKeever, Sean, 183
McKellen, Ian, 247
McKenzie, Anne, 23
McKenzie, Leonard, 322
McKeown, Dale, 182
McLeod, Bob, 271, 412
McMahon, Julian, 136
McNiven, Steve, 114 (ill.)
McSnurtle the Turtle, 147
McTaggart, Moira, 410, 412
McTeigue, James, 382
McTopp, Bottles, 317
Meachum, Harold, 198
Meatball, 104
Media Circus, 140
Medusa, 122, 135, 194
Mega Man. 256
MegaMind, 80
Megaton Man, 75
Meggan, 408
Mego Toys, 14
Meloni, Christopher, 161
Melt Man, 333
Meltdown, 413
Melter, 200
Meltzer, Brad, 156, 207
Melville, Herman, 166
Men of Mystery Spotlight Special, 17 (ill.)
Mendes, Eva, 319
Menorah Man, 248
Mentnor, 373, 374
Mento, 122
Mentor, 93, 94
Mephisto, 169, 278, 298–99, 311, 361
Mera, 31, 332, 341
Mercurio, 234
Mercury, 132, 143, 233, 234
Mercury, Max, 145, 147
Meredith, Burgess, 360
Merino, Jesus, 351
Meriwether, Lee, 95
Merlin, 60, 61, 332
Mermaid Man, 79, 334
Merman/Merboy, 398
Merry, Girl of a Thousand Gimmicks, 339–40
Merryman, 74, 193, 194
Meskin, Mort, 208, 320, 387
Messick, Don, 165
Messner-Loebs, William, 145
Metal Master, 180
Metal Men, **233–34,** 233 (ill.), 285, 341, 360
Metalman, 224
Metamorpho, 206, **234–35,** 235 (ill.), 259, 260
Metcalf, Curtis, 238
Metcalf, Mark, 67
Meteor Man, 78, 166, 308, 332
Metro Man, 80
Metro Woman, 279
Meugniot, Will, 15, 125, 126 (ill.), 139
Mexicans, 245
Mexico City, Mexico, 279
Meyer, Dina, 47, 56
Michelangelo, 368
Michelinie, David, 40, 162, 202
Michigan, 279
Microbe, 254
The Micronauts, 81
Midnight, 3
Midnight Man, 25, 242
Midnight Nation, 190
Midnighter, 36, 249, 393
Midwood-Tower, 373
Might Man and Yukk, 332
Mightor, 166
Mighty Avengers, 292
Mighty Crusaders, 10, 356
The Mighty Heroes, 331
The Mighty Magnor, 76
Mighty Man, 291
Mighty Moppet, 116
Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers, **235–37,** 236 (ill.)
Mighty Mouse, 73, 77, 147, 331, 333
Mighty Sore, 74
Mighty Thor, 74
Mignola, Mike, 110, 171–74, 171 (ill.), 172 (ill.)
Miki, Danny, 303 (ill.)
Milestone heroes, **237–39,** 238 (ill.), 248
Milgrom, Allen, 140, 162, 182
Military Comics, 245, 316
Milk and Cheese, 76
Millar, Mark, 37, 40, 345, 395, 407
Millar, Miles, 313
Millard, Bill, 317
Miller, Frank
    Batman, 16, 52, 53, 95
    Black Widow, 65
    Daredevil, 15
    Elektra, 16, 127–28
    Hellboy, 171
    Iron Fist, 199
    Punisher, 274–75
    rejected superheroes, 76
    Robin, 283
    Spawn, 304
    Spirit, 319
    Wolverine, 394
    X-O Manowar, 384 (ill.)
    Zorro, 422
Miller, Jason, 281
Miller, Len, 239
Miller, Mark Thomas, 78
Miller, Morgan, 213
Milligan, Peter, 386, 416, 417
Millionaire, Tony, 25, 76
Mills, John, 121
Mills, June, 241
Mills, Tarpe, 241, 339
Milo, 232
Milton the Monster Show, 148
Ming the Merciless, 333
Minute-Man, 4, 71, 78, 354
Miracleman, 125, **239–41,** 242 (ill.)
Mirage, 192, 367, 412
Mirage Studios, 368
Mirror Master, 144, 145, 326, 359
Misfits, 19
Misfits of Science, 78
Miss America (Marvel Comics), 195, 196, 340, 355
Miss America (Quality Comics), 146, 277, 354
Miss Fury, **241–42,** 339

Miss Liberty, 355–56
Miss Martian, 419
Miss Masque, 63, 138, 340
Miss Patriot, 354
Miss Victory, 4, 340, 354
Mist, 320, 358
"Mister" entries. See *also* "Mr." entries
Mister America, 354
Mister Conan, 234
Mister E, 196, 386
Mister Gum, 224
Mister Hyde, 370
Mister Miracle, 11, 206, 211, 251, 252, 253
Mister Mystery, 263
Mister Thin, 116
Misty Knight, 198, 199
Misty Magic, 333
Mitchell, Kel, 78
Mitchell, Mary, 176, 199
Mitchell, Mike, 79
Mjolnir, 370
MLJ Publications, 4, 32
Moby Dick and the Mighty Mightor, 166
Mockingbird, 169
Mode, Edna, 192
Modern Age (1985-present), **15–19,** 17 (ill.), 19 (ill.)
Modok, 84
Moebius, 299
Moench, Doug, 119, 181, 242, 247, 302
Mojo, 416
Mojo Jojo, 272, 334
Moldoff, Katrina, 55
Moldoff, Sheldon, 49, 54, 170
Mole Man, 134, 360
Molecula, 271
Molecule Man, 360
Molina, Alfred, 313
Moltar, 165, 301, 361
Molten Man, 308
Monarch, 79, 88, 167–68
Mondo, 411
Mon-El, 217
Monet, 414
Monk, 117, 286
Monkeyman and O'Brien, 76
Monkton, Lou, 297
Monolith, 129
Monroe, Ororo, 404
Monroe, Vaughn, 153
Monsieur Mallah, 123
Monsky, Paul, 139
Monstadt, 223, 224
Monster Girl, 197–98
Monster Society of Evil, 358
Montoya, Renee, 100, 248, 249
Moon Girl, 340
Moon Knight, 177, **242–43**, 249, 353
Moondragon, 163
Mooney, Jim, 116, 268 (ill.), 301
Moonrider, Mark, 252
Moonstar, 416
Moonstar, Danielle, 248, 412, 413, 414
Moonstone Books, 263
Moore, Alan
    Albion, 28
    America's Best Comic Heroes, 26–28
    Black Terror, 63
    Captain Atom, 88
    Captain Marvel parody, 76
    First American, 355
    League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, 215, 216
    Miracleman, 125, 239
    1963, 25
    Shadow, 296
    Spawn, 304
    Spirit, 318
    Superduperman, 24
    Superfolks, 24
    Swamp Thing, 22, 384–85
    "The First American," 140
    V for Vendetta, 381, 382, 423
    Watchmen, 16, 33, 99, 292, 344, 389–91
    WildC.A.T.S., 392
    Woman in Red, 338
    X-Men: Excalibur, 407
Moore, John Francis, 145
Moore, Lean, 28
Moore, Ray, 261
Moore, Steve, 27
Moore, Stuart, 249
Moore, Terry, 25, 420
Moorehead, Agnes, 294
Moorhead, Ja'nelle, 152
Morales, Mark, 114 (ill.)
Morales, Miles, 248, 311
Morales, Rags, 351
Morales, Robert, 85
Moran, Mike, 239, 240
Morbius, 362
Mordru, 218, 363
Mordru the Merciless, 360
More Fun Comics, 119, 155, 305, 352
Moretz, Chloë, 280, 345 (ill.)
Morgan, Ace, 97
Morgan, Jeffrey Dean, 391
Morgan, Joe, 35
Morgan, Tom, 271
Moriarty, James, 215
Morisi, Dyna, 138
Morisi, Pete "PAM," 98
Morituri Process, 24–25
Morning, Lori, 117
Morpheus, 16, 290, 385
Morris, Howard, 165
Morris, Phil, 228
Morrison, Bill, 45, 46, 345
Morrison, Bret, 294
Morrison, Grant
    Animal Man, 385
    Authority, 37
    Batman, 53
    Bulletman, 71
    Doom Patrol, 123, 386
    Justice League of America, 207
    Justice Society of America, 211
    Marvel Boy, 229
    Merryman, 194
    Robin, 283
    Shining Knight, 61
    Spawn, 304
    Superman, 350, 351
    Tomorrow Woman, 285
    WildC.A.T.S., 392
    X-Men, 406–7
    Zatanna, 421
Morrison, Robbie, 37
Morrow, T. O., 284
Morse, Barbara "Bobbi," 169
Morse, Megan, 419
Morse, Robert, 253
Mortellaro, Tony, 340 (ill.)
M'orzz, M'gann, 419
Mosaic, 19
Moss, Carrie-Anne, 344
Mother Askani, 409
Motorhead, 111
Mott, 224
Moulton, Charles, 397
Mouse Man, 398
The Mouse of Tomorrow, 147
"Mr." entries. See *also* "Mister" entries
Mr. A, 24, 100
Mr. Atom, 358
Mr. Banjo, 92
Mr. Blaze, 361
Mr. Carrion, 317
Mr. Element, 359
Mr. Fantastic, 9, 122, 133–36, 183, 271, 361
Mr. Fear, 105
Mr. Freeze, 360
Mr. Furious, 78, 110
Mr. Immortal, 40
Mr. Incredible, 191, 192
Mr. Inflato, 334
Mr. Justice, 32
Mr. Majestic, 391
Mr. Midas, 229
Mr. Midnight, 77, 317
Mr. Mind, 92–93, 147, 358
Mr. Murder, 71
Mr. Mxyzptlk, 325, 326, 358, 360
Mr. Mystic, 316, 352
Mr. Night, 230
Mr. Nobody, 315
Mr. Qubit, 204
Mr. Scarlet, 71, 230
Mr. Silke, 109
Mr. Sinister, 363
Mr. Tawky Tawny, 93, 147
Mr. Terrific, 10, 77, 209, 248
Mr. Twister, 365
Mr. White, 391
Mr. Who, 357
Mr. Xtreme, 279
Mr. Zero, 360
Ms. Indestructible, 78
Ms. Marvel, 89, **243–44,** 243 (ill.), 406
Ms. Mystic, 15
Ms. Victory, 137

Mulcahy, Russell, 295
Mullaney, Jim, 200
multiculturalism, **244–49,** 245 (ill.)
Multi-Man, 97, 165, 331, 332
multimedia superheroes, 17–19
Multiple Man, 414
Mumy, Bill, 302
Mundi, Rex, 377
Munoz, Armando, 415
Murder Master, 294
Murdock, "Battling" Jack, 105
Murdock, Matt, 105–9, 127, 128
Murdock, Mike, 107
Murmur, 23
Murphy, Cillian, 53
Murray, Bill, 78
Murray, Mina, 215, 216
Murray, Will, 119
Musketeer, 245
Mutant Liberation Force, 413, 416
Mutant X, 414
Mutants and Masterminds, 337
My Chemical Romance, 112
My Greatest Adventure, 122, 284
My Hero, 79
My Super Ex-Girlfriend, 79
Mysterio, 308, 361
Mysterious Traveler, 263
Mystery in Space, 21
Mystery Incorporated, 25
Mystery Men, 78, 110
Mystery Woman of the Jungle, 338
Mysterymen Stories, 110
Mystic Comics, 355
Mystique, 243, 408, 414

N

Nabu, 119, 120
Nakamura, Hiro, 174
The Naked Gun, 79
Namor the Sub-Mariner, 244–45
Namora, 230, 253, 254, 322, 323, 324, 341
Namorita, 253–54, 323, 324
Naples, Italy, 280
Narya, 23
Nash, Bruce, 280
Nash, Carter, 77
Natchios, Elektra, 127, 343
National, 316
National Allied Publications, 2
National Comics, 2, 354
National Hockey League, 19
National Lampoon, 75
Native Americans, 245, 246, 247, 248
Nauck, Todd, 222, 419
Nazis, 173, 185, 196, 358
Neary, Paul, 37
Necromancers, 384
Nedor, 27
Neeson, Liam, 18, 53
Negative Man, 122, 123, 386
Negative Woman, 123
Negative Zone, 89
Nelson, Craig T., 191
Nelson, Diane, 18
Nelson, Franklin "Foggy," 105, 107, 108, 109
Nelson, Kent, 119, 120
Nelson, Kent V. (grandnephew), 120
Nelvanna, 23
Nemesis, 10
Nemesis: A Perfect World, 337
Neron, 130, 221, 363
Neveldine, Mark, 155
Neville, Dennis, 170
The New Adventures of Superboy, 116
The New Adventures of Superman, 10
The New Adventures of Wonder Woman, 14, 399, 400 (ill.)
New Avengers, 122, 200, 270, 315
New Genesis, 251, 252
New Gods, 11, 228, **251–53,** 252 (ill.), 371
New Guardians, 249
New Mutants, 113, 271, 301, 409, 411, 412–14, 416
New Spawn, 305
The New Teen Titans, 16, 248, 259, 365–66
New Universe, 24
New Warriors, 162, 229, **253–54,** 324
New York City, 279
New York Initiative, 279
Newell, Mindy, 401
Newman, Paul, 159
Newmar, Julie, 95, 342
Newsboy Legion, 225, 252
Newton, Don, 262
Newton, John Haymes, 328
Newton John, Olivia, 299
The Next Men, 110
Nextwave, 285
Nexus, 15, 110, 302
Nexus the Living Corporation, 229
Nguyen, Dustin, 37
Nicholas, Charles, 66, 266
Nicholson, Jack, 53
Nicieza, Fabian, 113, 183, 249, 253, 257, 350
Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.E.I.L.D. See Fury, Nick
Nickel Comics, 70
Night Man, 377, 378
Night Raven, 382
Night Thrasher, 229, 253, 254, 257
Nightcrawler, 13, 247, 405, 408
Nighteyes, 315
Nighthawk, 115, 319, 320
Nightmare, 121
Nightowl, 230
Nightshade, 10, 87, 88, 98, 99
Nightveil, 137–38, 139
Nightwing, 52, 53, **254–56,** 255 (ill.), 282, 366, 367, 368
Nikita, 345
Nikki, 162, 301
Niles, Steve, 305
1963, 25
The 99, 249
Ninth Men, 213
Nite Owl, 391
Nite Owls, 99
Nitro, 89, 254
Niven, Larry, 377
Nixon, Richard, 13
NM-E, 377
No Name, 279
No Ordinary Family, 18, 345
No Zone, 333
Nocenti, Ann, 109, 314
Noddy, 143
Nodell, Mart, 158
Noh-Varr, 229
Noir, 391
Noir, Bette, 204
Nolan, Christopher, 17, 53, 54, 351
Nolte, Nick, 183, 363
Nomad, 84, 356
NoMan, 285, 373, 374
Nomaric, John, 117
normalman, 75
Norman, Shilo, 211
Norris, Paul, 30
Norriss, Barbara, 115
Norriss, Jack, 115
Norse mythology, 370–71
Northstar, 22–23
Northwind, 210
Norton, Edward, 184
Not Brand Echh, 74–75
Nova, 253, 254, **256–57**
Nova, Cassandra, 406
Nova Kane, 99
Nova Omega, 257
Nova Roma, 413
Novick, Irv, 61, 144
Nowak, Leo, 283
N.O.W.H.E.R.E., 386
Nowlan, Kevin, 27, 46 (ill.), 362 (ill.)
Noxon, Marti, 69
Nuclear Age, 140
nuclear war, 6
Nuke, 319
Nukla, 10, 10 (ill.), 87
Nuklon, 210
Nylon Rose, 317
Nyx, 279

O

Oakley, Shane, 28
O'Barr, James, 16, 353
Oberon, 251
Obi-Wan Kenobe/Highfather, 253
O'Brian, Eel, 265–66
Obsidian, 210
Ocean Master, 360
O'Connell, Jerry, 94
Octopus, 317, 319
Odin, 370, 371, 372, 373
O'Donnell, Chris, 256, 282
Oedipus Wrecks, 220
Oeming, Michael Avon, 25
O'Grady, Eric, 30
O.G.R.E., 332
O'Haircut, Scarlett, 140
O'Hara, Miguel, 310
Oil Can Harry, 147

Oka, Masi, 174, 175 (ill.)
Oksner, Bob, 228, 231, 330 (ill.)
Ol' Greenskin, 180
Old Man Logan, 395
Oldman, Gary, 53, 54
Oleson, George, 262
Olivetti, Ariel, 40, 165, 166
Olliffe, Patrick, 384
Olsen, Jake, 372
Olsen, Jimmy, 256, 259, 347
Olson, James S., 356
OMAC: One Man Army Corps, 11, 302
Omega, 301
Omega Flight, 23
Omega Spawn, 305
Omega the Unknown, 301–2
Omegatron, 114
Omnidroid, 192
Omni-Man, 191, 197
One Man Army, 4, 354
O'Neal, Shaquille, 248
O'Neil, April, 369
O'Neil, Denny
    Action Heroes, 99
    Batman, 51, 254
    Green Arrow, 12, 156
    Green Lantern/Green Arrow, 159–60
    Iron Fist, 199
    Iron Man, 203
    Justice League of America, 206
    Power Man, 269
    Shadow, 295
    Superman, 349
    Wonder Woman, 342, 398
O'Neill, Kevin, 26, 28, 215, 216
Oni, 279
Onslaught, 406
Ooze, Ivan, 236
Opena, Jerome, 417
Oracle, 47, 55, 142, 187, 207
Orb, 153
Orb of Ra, 234
Ordway, Jerry, 28, 40, 71, 94, 210, 347 (ill.)
Origin, 395
Orion, 207, 213, 251, 252, 253
Orka, 177
Orka the Human Killer Whale, 323
Orlando, 215–16
Orlando, Joe, 193, 306
Orphan, 416, 417
Ortiz, Phil, 45
Orwell, George, 382
Osborn, Harry, 308, 309, 312
Osborn, Norman, 41, 292, 309, 311, 312, 373
O'Shea, Shane, 74
Ostrander, John, 55, 141, 176, 199, 228, 306
Otherworld, 409
Ottley, Ryan, 197 (ill.)
Oubliette, 229
Out of the Vortex, 111
Outsiders, 52, 235, 256, **259–60,** 363, 419
Overgard, William, 104
OverLord, 291
Overlord and his Subterraneans, 374
Ovulator, 334
Owens, Gary, 165, 166
Owl, 105, 361
Owl Girl, 340
Owsley, Jim, 199, 269
Ox, 105
Oz, 68
Ozymandias, 99, 390, 391

P

Pacheco, Carlos, 40
Pacific Comics, 15, 213, 239–40, 286
"The Pact," 251
Page, Bettie, 286, 287
Page, Ellen, 26
Page, Karen, 105, 107–8
Pain, Lois, 24
Pain Killer Jane, 174
Paine, David, 265
Pak, Greg, 183
Pal, George, 119
Paladin, 177
Palmer, Diana, 261, 262
Palmer, Ray, 35, 36, 142
Palmiotti, Jimmy, 77, 177, 331
Paltrow, Gwyneth, 203
Panettiere, Hayden, 174, 175 (ill.)
Pantha, 366
Panther Man, 358
Paper Man, 398
Papp, George, 155
Paquette, Yanick, 27, 40
Para Demons, 326
Paradigm, 203, 204
Paradise Island, 397, 398
Paradise X, 89
Parallax, 161
Parasite, 349, 360
Parker, Ben, 307–8, 311, 312, 313
Parker, Bill, 91, 92
Parker, Jeff, 407
Parker, Mary, 308
Parker, May (aunt), 307–8, 311, 312, 313
Parker, May (daughter), 315
Parker, Pat, War Nurse, 340
Parker, Peter, 9, 13, 307–11, 315
Parker, Richard, 308
Parr, Bob, 191, 192
Parr, Dash, 192
Parr, Helen, 191, 192
Parr, Jack-Jack, 192
Parr, Violet, 191, 192
Pasdar, Adrian, 175 (ill.), 176
Patch, 395
Patriot, 193, 196, 419
Patriot, Pat, 4, 340, 354
Patriot (Rising Stars), 281
Paulson, Sarah, 319
Pays, Amanda, 145
Payton, Will, 321
Peacemaker, 98, 99, 361
Peake, Bob, 242
Pearson, Bill, 374
Peddy, Arthur, 146
Pederson, Illinois, 280
Pee Wee, 104
Peecolo, 338
Peel, Emma, 216, 341–42
Peevy, 286
Pekar, Harvey, 25
Peleozogt, Zachary T., 127
Pemberton, Sylvester, 321
Pena, Elizabeth, 192
Penance, 410, 411
Penelope, 279
Penguin, 49, 282, 358, 359, 360
Penny, 149
Pennyworth, Alfred, 49
Penthouse, 375
Pep Comics, 354
Per Degaton, 358
Percival Popp the Supercop, 306
Pérez, George, 40, 162, 206, 206 (ill.), 255, 351, 365–66, 378, 398 (ill.), 399, 401
Perleman, Ronald, 17
Perlin, Don, 242
Perlman, Ron, 111, 173 (ill.), 174, 253
Perry, Luke, 67
Peter, Harry G., 398
Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt, 98, 99
Peter Porker, the Spectacular Spider Ham, 75, 149
Petrelli, Nathan, 174
Petrelli, Peter, 176
Pezzini, Sara, 353
Pfeiffer, Michelle, 95–96, 343–44
Pfeufer, Carl, 322
P'Gell, 318
Phantasm, 366
The Phantom, 2, 13, 80, 99, 225, **261–63,** 333, 338
Phantom Eagle, 355
Phantom Girl, 217–18
Phantom Lady, 3, 13, 146, 146 (ill.), 147, 226, 339, 340–41, 345
Phantom Lady, 5
Phantom Reporter, 196
Phantom Rider, 154, 155
Phantom Stranger, 206, **263–64,** 352, 386
Phantom Zero, 279
Phantom Zone, 348
Phat, 417
Phathead, 291
Phoenix, 163, 408, 409
Phoenix Force, 408, 409
Photon, 89
Phyla-Vell, 89, 163
Pied Piper, 90, 144, 359
Pike, 67
Pilgrim, Deena, 25
The Pilgrim's Progress (Bunyan), 215
Pina, Javier, 204
Pink Ranger, 236
Pinky, 71, 230
Pip the Troll, 299
Pirana, 10

- Pirate Jenny, 216
- *Pitt,* 190
- Pitt, Brad, 80
- Pivan, Jeremy, 131
- Pixar Animation Studios, 191
- Pixie, 407
- Planet of Oz, 325
- Planetary, **264–65,** 264 (ill.), 393
- Plant Master, 35, 360
- Plas, 266
- Plaster of Paris, 317
- Plastic Man, 3, 5, 6, 116, 131, 207, **265–67,** 324
- Plastic Man (M.F. Publications villain), 10
- Plastic Sam, 73
- Plastique, 88, 141
- Platinum, 233, 341
- Platt, Tina, 233, 234
- *Playboy,* 267
- Ploog, Mike, 153, 319
- Pluto, 371
- Plutonian, 203–4
- Plutonium Man, 234
- *Pocket Comics,* 58, 339
- Poet, 281
- Poison Ivan, 140, 246, 355, 359
- Poison Ivy, 96, 360, 363
- Pokey Oaks Kindergarten, 272
- Polar Man, 279
- Polaris, 404, 414
- *Police Comics,* 146, 225, 265, 266, 339
- *Police Woman,* 342
- Pollard, Keith, 199, 269, 309
- Pope, Paul, 22, 25
- Popneckere, Herbie, 74
- Porcupine, 29
- Portacio, Whilce, 16, 189, 190, 271, 406
- Portela, Francis, 219
- Porter, Howard, 207
- Portland, Oregon, 279
- Portman, Natalie, 373, 382
- Potter, Greg, 399
- Potts, "Pepper," 200
- POW! (Purveyors of Wonder) Entertainment, 19, 204
- Powder Pouf, 317
- Powell, Bob, 59, 60, 118, 294, 316
- Powell, Chris, 254
- Powell, Justin, 387
- Powell, Stephanie, 345
- Power, Alex, 270, 271, 272
- Power, Jack, 270
- Power, James, 270
- Power, Julie, 270, 271, 272
- Power, Katie, 270, 271
- Power, Margaret, 270
- Power, Tyrone, 423
- Power Chick, 78
- *The Power Company,* 226
- Power Girl, 55, 209, 210, 211, 331, 342
- Power Man, 135, 176, 199, 200, 248, **267–70,** 268 (ill.), 362
- *Power of Shazam,* 94
- Power Pack, **270–72,** 343
- Power Princess, 319, 320
- Power Rangers, 235–37
- Powerhouse, 256, 272
- *The Powerpuff Girls,* 166, **272–73,** 273 (ill.), 334, 344
- Powers, Bill, 354
- Powers, Principal, 79
- Pozhar, 141
- Prairie Troubadour, 387
- Prankster, 347, 358, 360
- Pratt, Al, 35
- Preacher, 16, 354, 386
- *Predator,* 110
- Premiani, Bruno, 122, 284
- Presley, Elvis, 91
- Preston, Kelly, 79
- Prestor John, 367
- Price, Vincent, 360, 382
- Pride, 420
- Priest, Christopher, 62, 85, 183
- Priestley, Jason, 219
- *Prime,* 16, 377, 378, 378 (ill.)
- Primevil, 377
- Primordial Annihilator, 363
- Prince, Diana, 342, 343, 397, 398, 399, 401, 402
- Prince, Martin, 45
- Prince Amentep, 352
- Prince Nabob the Submoron, 193
- Prince Namor the Sub-Mariner, 134, 199, 253, 322, 323–24
- Prince of Stories, 290
- Prince T'Challa, 246
- Prince Valiant, 262
- Princess Anelle, 419
- Princess Diana, 397, 398
- Princess Elizabeth, 381
- Princess Fen, 322
- Princess Jarella, 180–81
- Princess Maru, 397
- Princess Morebucks, 334
- Princess Projectra, 218
- *The Prisoner,* 382
- *The Pro,* 77
- Prodigy, 414
- Professor Fortune, 205
- Professor Potter, 348
- Professor Torture, 357
- Professor Utonium, 272
- Professor Venom, 104
- Professor X, 122, 244, 403, 404, 406
- Professor Zoom, 144, 145, 359, 419
- Project Cadmus, 328–29
- *Project Superpowers,* 63, 104
- Project Youngblood, 125
- *The Projectionist,* 77
- *Promethea,* 26–27, 28
- Prometheus, 58, 156
- Prospero, 215
- Proteus, 100
- *Prototype,* 16, 378
- Proudstar, James, 416
- Proudstar, John, 405
- Pryde, Kitty, 249, 395, 405–6, 408, 409
- Pryor, Madelyne, 415
- Prysm, 367
- PS, 318
- Psyche, 412
- Psycho, 333
- Psycho Pirate, 209, 358
- Psycho Man, 360
- Psylocke, 406, 417
- Publick, Jackson, 79
- Puck, 23
- Puerto Ricans, 247
- Puke, 224
- Pulsar, 89
- *The Puma Man,* 77
- Punch and Jewelee, 87, 361
- Punisher, **273–75,** 276 (ill.)
  - Ghost Rider, 154
  - Heroes for Hire, 176, 177
  - Marvel anti hero, 15
  - Moon Knight, 243
  - Power Pack, 271
  - Spawn, 304
  - Spider-Man, 13, 362
  - video game, 337
- Punk Rock, 333
- Puppet Master, 134, 135, 360
- Purebread, Polly, 148
- Pureheart, Pearl, 147
- Pureheart the Powerful, 10
- Purple Girl, 23
- Purple Haze, 152
- Puzzler, 358
- Pym, Henry, 28–30, 40
- Pyroman, 63

Q

- Quagmire, Joshua, 149
- Quality Comics, 145, 265, 316
- Quality Communications, 382
- Quantum, Jenny, 36
- Quasar, 229, 302
- Quatermain, Allan, 215, 216, 216 (ill.)
- Queen, Oliver, 155, 156
- Queen Bee, 205, 360
- Queen Hippolyta, 397, 399, 401
- Queen of Hearts, 279
- Quesada, Joe, 109, 311
- Quest, Jonny, 165, 286
- Question, 10, 88, 98, 99–100, 248, 249, 389
- Quick, Jesse, 145, 367
- Quick, Johnny, 145, 210
- Quick Draw McGraw, 147, 165, 423
- Quicksilver
  - Heroes for Hire, 176
  - Innumans, 194
  - Iron Fist, 199
  - Mercury, Max, 145, 147
  - X-Men, 414
- Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, **277–78**
  - Avengers, 29, 39
  - Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, 404
  - multiculturalism, 249
  - rehabilitation, 363
- Quill, Peter, 301

Quinn, Harley, 56, 96, 337, 364
Quinto, Zachary, 176
Quitely, Frank, 37, 350, 407
Quixote, Don, 215

R

Raab, Ben, 409
Raboy, Mac, 5, 71, 90
Rackham, Albert, 268
Rad, 138
Radd, Norrin, 298
Radioactive Man, 44–45, 76, 370
Radioactive Rogue, 295
Radius, 23
Raffles, A. J., 216
Ragdoll, 143
Ragman, 249
Ragnarok the Cosmic Viking, 116, 371, 372
Rags the Tiger, 147
Rai, 16, 247
Raimi, Sam, 18, 295, 310, 312, 313, 363
Rain City Superhero Movement, 279
Rainbow Archer, 155
Rainmaker, Sarah, 151
Ralston, Henry, 117
Rama Krishna, 112
Ramamurthy, Sendhil, 175 (ill.)
Rama Tut, 40
Rambeau, Monica, 89
Ramos, Humberto, 238
Rampaging Hulk, 181
Ramsey, Doug, 413
Ranaq the Great Devourer, 23
Rancor, 163
Rand, Ayn, 100
Rand, Daniel, 176, 198, 269, 270
Rand, Heather, 198
Rand, Wendell, 198
Randolph, Khary, 204
Rangers, 155
Raphael, 368
Raptor, 315
Ra's al Ghul, 51, 52, 53, 283, 362
Rashad, Hamza, 152
Rasputin, Ilyana, 409, 412–13
Rasputin, Piotr, 173, 409
Rat Pfink and Boo-Boo, 77
Raven, 366, 367, 373, 374
The Ray, 3
Rayda, 138
Raymond, Ronnie, 141–42
Rayner, Kyle, 160–61, 248, 367
Razor, 17
Razorhawk, 279
Rea, Stephen, 382
Reagan, Nancy, 366
Reagan, Ronald, 274, 275
real-life superheroes, **279–80**
R.E.B.E.L.S. (Revolutionary Elite Brigade to Eradicate L.E.G.I.O.N. Supremacy), 221
Rebis, 386
Red Arrow, 280, 368
Red Circle, 33
Red Ghost, 115
Red Guardian, 64, 115
Red Hood, 283
Red Hulk, 183
Red Lanter Corps, 161
Red Ranger, 236
Red Raven, 196
Red Robin, 260, 368
Red Rush, 197
Red She-Hulk, 183
Red Skull, 4, 81, 84, 85, 86, 358, 359
Red Sonja, 342
Red Star, 366
Red Star Group, 374
Red Tornado, 73, 74, 206, 284, 338
Red Wolf, 248
Redcoats, 356
Redeemers, 320
Redmond, Dinah, 56
Redwing, 367
Reed, Robby, 116
Reed, Rod, 92
Reep Daggle, 218
Reeve, Christopher, 256, 349
Reeves, George, 347–48
Reeves, Keanu, 386
Regan, Rory, 249
Reggie, 74
Regla, Sal, 37
Regulators, 296
Reid, Britt, 157, 158
Reid, Britt, Jr., 158
Reid, Dan, 157
"The Reign of the Superman," 346
Reilly, Ben, 311
Reilly, Billy Bob, 417
Reilly, Rod, 146
Reiner, Larry, 80
Reinhold, Bill, 384
Reinman, Paul, 295
Reinstein, Professor, 81
Reis, Ivan, 31, 40
Reitman, Ivan, 79
Remember, Rick, 417
Renner, Jeremy, 41, 169
Renny, 117
Replica, 163
Reppion, John, 28
Repulsa, Rita, 236
Resurrection Man, 353
The Return of Captain Invincible, 77
Reubens, Paul, 78, 110
Reva, 268
Reverse-Flash, 359, 419
Revolto, Rito, 236
Rex, 262
Reyes, Jaime, 67, 248
Reynolds, Bob, 292
Reynolds, Lindy, 292
Reynolds, Ryan, 114, 160 (ill.), 161
Rhino, 361
Rhoda, 103
Rhodes, Jim, 202, 203
Richards, Cliff, 187 (ill.)
Richards, Dan, 146, 225
Richards, Franklin, 134, 271
Richards, Mary, 342
Richards, Reed, 9, 29, 97, 133–36, 272, 361
Richards, Susan, 192
Richards, Valeria, 136
Richardson, Mike, 109–10, 111, 232
Richie Rich, 60
Richmond, Kane, 294
Richmond, Kyle, 115
Rickles, Don, 252
Rico, Don, 103, 185
Rictor, 413, 414, 416
Riddler, 49, 325, 358, 360, 363
Rider, Richard, 254, 256–57
Ridgway, John, 182
Rigg, Diana, 341–42
Rima the Jungle Girl, 325, 342
Ringmaster and His Circus of Crime, 308
Rip, 334
The Ripping Friends, 334
Rising Stars, 190, **280–81**, 280 (ill.), 305
Risk, 367
Ritchie, Roxanne, 80
Ritchson, Alan, 31
Ritter, John, 77
Riviera, Buick, 44
Roach Coach, 272
Roazakis, Bob, 75
Robbins, Frank, 195, 195 (ill.), 196, 254, 295
Robbins, June, 97
Robbins, Trina, 190, 339, 343, 399
Robby Robot, 116
Robert, Alain "Spider-Man," 280
Roberts, Leonard, 175 (ill.)
Robertson, Chris, 204
Robertson, Cliff, 312
Robeson, Kenneth, 117
Robin. *See* Robin the Boy Wonder
Robin Hood, 382
Robin the Boy Wonder, **281–83**
    alleged homosexuality, 341
    Batgirl, 47
    Batman, 49–54
    Batwoman, 54
    Captain Action uniform, 80
    Catwoman, 94
    Earth-Two, 209
    enemies, 359, 360, 363
    giant bees, 6
    goes to college, 12
    introduced, 3
    Nightwing, 254–56
    sells war bonds, 4
    Super Friends, 324, 326
    Superboy, 328
    Teen Titans, 365, 366, 367
    on TV, 10
    Young Justice, 419
Robinson, Alex, 25
Robinson, James, 210, 321, 377
Robinson, Jerry, 5, 49
Robot, 198
Robot Archie, 28

robot heroes, **283–85,** 284 (ill.)
Robot Master, 294
Robotman, 122, 210, 283–84
Rock Trolls, 371
Rocket, 238
Rocket Comics, 112
Rocket Raccoon, 149, 163
Rocket Red, 206
Rocketeer, 15, 126, **286–87**, 286 (ill.)
Rocketgirl, 340
Rockman, 196
Rockwell, Johnny, 328
Rockwell, Sam, 203
Rocky and Bullwinkle, 147
Rodent Man, 358
Rodriguez, Robert, 18, 225
Rog-2000, 285
Rogen, Seth, 158
Roger the Friendly Homunculus, 173
Rogers, Buck, 300
Rogers, Marshall, 51, 125, 126
Rogers, Steve, 41, 81–86, 169, 196, 270, 357
Rogue, 244, 406, 407
Rohmer, Sax, 198, 200, 245
Rokk Krinn, 218
role-playing game (RPG) industry, 335–38
Rom, 81
Roma, 409
Romanoff, Natasha, 64–65, 342
Romanova, Natasha, 107
Romero, Cesar, 360
Romita, John, 9, 107, 195 (ill.), 273, 308 (ill.), 309, 310, 340 (ill.), 394
Romita, John, Jr., 40, 109, 132, 183, 202, 311, 345, 406
Rommbu, 177
Romulus, 395–96
Ronan the Accuser, 195, 302
Ronin, 169
Rope Girl, 334
Rope Man, 331
Rorschach, 99, 389, 390, 390 (ill.), 391
Rosamund, Lady, 60
Rosen, Artie, 292
Rosenbaum, Michael, 145, 328 (ill.)
Rosenberg, Scott, 312, 377
Rosenberg, Willow, 67, 68, 69
Ross, Alex
  Astro City, 33, 34 (ill.)
  Batwoman, 55
  Black Terror, 63
  Invaders, 196
  Justice League of America, 207
  Justice Society of America, 210
  Phantom, 263
  Project Superpowers, 105
  Rocketeer, 287
  Shazam, 94
  Watchmen, 391
Ross, Betty/Betsy, 82, 178, 182, 183, 184
Ross, Courtney, 408
Ross, Thaddeus E. "Thunderbolt," 178, 180, 182, 183, 184
Roth, Tim, 184
Roth, Werner, 404, 405
Rotsler, William, 121, 202
Rouleau, Duncan, 334
Rourke, Mickey, 203
Routh, Brandon, 351
Roux, Stephane, 422
Rowdyruff Boys, 272
Rowlands, Alan, 199, 269
Royal Family, 194, 195
Royal Flush Gang, 205
Royer, Mike, 252 (ill.)
Rozen, George, 294
Rozum, John, 239
Rucka, Greg, 401
Rude, Steve, 15, 43, 110, 302
Ruffalo, Mark, 41, 184
Ruffino, Nei, 56 (ill.)
Rumor, 112
Runaways, 420
Rune, 378
Rusch, Jason, 142
Rush, Geoffrey, 78
Russell, Kurt, 79
Russian Starfire, 366
Russians, 246
Russo, Anthony, 281
Russo, Joe, 281
Rusty, 355
Ruthless, Rex, 333
Ryan, Paul, 24
Ryan, Red, 97
Ryder, Jack, 100

S

Saarsgard, Peter, 161
Saban, Haim, 236
Saban Entertainment, 236, 237
Sabertooth, 271
Sabra, 249
Sabre, 125
Sabretooth, 362, 395, 396, 414
Sachs, Bernard, 205
Sad Sack, 60
Sage, Vic, 99
Sahle, Harry, 185
Saiz, Jesus, 56, 56 (ill.), 226
Sakaar, 183
Sakai, Stan, 25, 149
Sale, Tim, 53, 96, 350
Salkind, Alexander, 349
Salkind, Ilya, 349
Salt Lake City, Utah, 279
Salu Digby, 218
Sam & Twitch, 189–90, 304
Samachson, Joe, 226
Samaritan, 279
Sammy, 318
Samsara, 203
Samson, Brock, 79
Samson, Leonard, 180, 182
San Diego, California, 279
Sanctuary, 281
Sand Saref, 317, 319
Sanders, Greg, 387, 388
Sanders, Niki, 176
Sanders, Sheriff, 387
Sandman, **289–90**
  enemies, 361
  Gaiman, Neil, 16
  introduced, 2
  Justice Society of America, 208, 210
  Kirby, Jack, 11
  Spider-Man, 308, 313
  superpatriot, 354
  Vertigo hero, 385, 386
Sandsmark, Cassie, 367, 401, 419
Sandsmark, Helena, 401
Sand-Superman, 362
Santangelo, John, 98
Sapien, Abe, 173, 174
Saracee, 23
Sardath, 21
Sardo, 184
Sarge Steel, 10, 87, 98
Sargent, Alvin, 312, 313
Sargon the Sorcerer, 206, 352
Sasquatch, 22, 23
Satan, 358
Saturday Night Live, 77–78, 79
Saturn Girl, 8, 219
Saturn Queen, 360
Saturnyne, 408
Saunders, Kendra, 171
Saunders, Shiera, 170, 171
Saunders, Tonia, 104
Sauron, 361
Savage, Clark, Jr., 117
Savage, Doc. See Doc Savage
Savage Dragon, 16, 174, 190, **290–91**, 291 (ill.), 333, 357
The Savage She-Hulk, 297, 298
Savant, 391
Scagliotti, Allison, 327
Scarecrow, 49, 53, 104, 216, 325, 358, 363
Scarlet Beetle, 29
Scarlet Pimpernel, 216
Scarlet Witch. See *also* Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch
  Avengers, 40, 248
  Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, 341
  Hawkeye, 169
  Jubilee, 412
  multiculturalism, 249
  Vision, 285
  Wolverine, 395
  Young Justice, 420
Schaffenberger, Kurt, 5, 90
Schiff, Jack, 300
Schmidt, Eric, 63–64
Schomburg, Alex, 5, 17 (ill.), 63 (ill.)
Schreiber, Liev, 396, 396 (ill.)
Schumacher, Joel, 283, 363
Schwab, Irwin, 75
Schwartz, Julius
  Adam Strange, 21
  Atom, 35
  Batgirl, 46

  Batman, 8, 50, 51, 54, 130, 254
  Fantastic Four, 8–9
  Flash, 143, 144
  Green Lantern, 8, 159
  Justice League of America, 205
  Justice Society of America, 209
  Martian Manhunter, 227
  Robin, 282
  Showcase, 7
  space heroes, 300
  Spectre, 306
  Superman, 12, 349
  Zatanna and Zatara, 421
Schwarzenegger, Arnold, 19
Science Fiction, 346
Scissor Men, 386
Scooby-Doo, 165, 166, 332
Scorpina, 236
Scorpion, 308, 361
Scott, Alan, 158
Scott, Ashley, 56, 187
Scott Free, 251
Scribbly, 284
Scylla, 204
Seagle, Steven T., 23, 334
Sealmen, 290
Seance, 112
Searle, Ronald, 409
Seattle, Washington, 279
Secord, Cliff, 286
Secret, 419
The Secret Defenders, 116
secret identities, 3
Secret Invasion: War of Kings, 195
"The Secret Origin of the Superhero" (Coogan), 353
Secret Origins, 264
Secret Society of Super Villains, 226
Secret Squirrel, 331
Secret Task Force Goranger, 236
Sedgwick, Kyra, 55
Seduca, 272
Seduction of the Innocent (Wertham), 6, 50, 54, 282, 359
Seeds of Destruction, 172
Sekhmet, 137
Sekowsky, Mike, 21, 193, 205, 206, 227, 234, 374, 398
Semic Press, 262
Sensation Comics, 339
The Sensational She-Hulk, 75
Sensei, 113
Sentinel, 210, 354
Sentinels, 404
The Sentinels of Justice, 87–88
Sentinels of Liberty Fan Club, 81–82
Sentry, 88, **292**
September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, 311, 357
Sepulveda, Miguel, 393
Seraph, 248
Serifan, 252
Sersi, 131
Set, 278
The Seven Samurai, 161
Seven Soldiers of Victory, 61, 71, 155, 208, 211, 387, 421
Severin, Marie, 180, 199, 342
Sglue, Elmer, 272
Sgt. Fury, 80
Sgt. *Kabukiman N.Y.P.D.*, 78
Sgt. Strike, 126
Shade, 279
Shade, Rac, 386
Shade the Changing Man, 386
Shado, 156
The Shadow, 1, 2, 13, 33, 48, 245, **293–95**, 293 (ill.), 382
Shadow Cabinet, 238
Shadow Junior, 294
Shadow Thief, 170, 360
Shadowcat, 249, 408
ShadowHawk, 190, **295–96**, 296 (ill.)
Shadows & Light, 177 (ill.), 179 (ill.)
Shadrac, 315
Shaggy Man, 360
Shah, Naseeruddin, 216 (ill.)
Shahn-Zi, 247
Shakespeare, William, 215
Shalla Bal, 298, 299
Shaloman, 248
Shaman, 22, 23, 248
Shang-Chi, the Master of Kung Fu, 176, 177, 198, 247
Shanks, Michael, 171
Shapesmith, 198
Shark, 159, 358, 359
Sharpe, Stud, 317
Shattered Image, 191
Shatterstar, 413, 416
Shaw, Dash, 25
Shaw, Mark, 225
Shaw, Scott, 79, 149
Shazam, 13, 14, 90, 91–94, 93, 230
Shazzan, 167
She-Cat, 137, 138
Sheen, Martin, 313
Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, 338
She-Hulk, 40, 136, 176, 248, **296–98**, 342
Sheldon, Gilbert, 74
Sheldon, Phil, 214
Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, 178
Shelley, Mitchell, 353
Shelton, Gilbert, 148
Shen Li-Min, 37
Shepherd, Tommy, 420
She-Ra: Princess of Power, 343
Sherman, Hal, 321
Sherman, Howard, 119
Sherman, Liz, 173, 174
Shi, 17, 128, 190, 344
Shi'ar, 195
Shi'ar Empire, 409
Shield, 4, 32–33, 81, 354, 355, 356, 358
S.H.I.E.L.D. (Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law-Enforcement Division), 64, 84, 109, 229, 313
Shields, Brooke, 161
Shimmerer, 138
Shining Knight, 61, 208, 210, 387
Shipp, John Wesley, 145
Shiskabob the Sorcerer, 140
Shiwan Khan, 294
Shocker, 361
Shoemaker, Terry, 271
Shoeshine Boy, 147
Shooter, Jim, 24, 40, 81, 162, 218, 349, 384
Shores, Syd, 82, 322
Short Cut, 279
Shorten, Harry, 373
Shotgun, 363
Shotgun Mary, 344
Shou-Lao the Undying, 198
Shoveller, 78, 110
Showcase, 7, 8, 21, 31, 35 (ill.), 143, 144, 167, 193, 233, 234, 306
Shredder, 369
Shrevnitz, Moe, 293
Shrinking Ray, 198
Shrinking Violet, 217, 218
Shroud, 314
Shulkie, 297
Shuster, Joe, 3 (ill.)
  Dr. Occult, 352
  Funnyman, 73
  Superboy, 327
  Superman, 2, 338, 346, 347, 349, 351
Shyamalan, M. Night, 18
sidekicks, 3
Siegel, Jerry
  Archie Comics, 33
  Dr. Occult, 352
  Funnyman, 73
  origins of Superman, 346
  Robotman, 283
  Shadow, 295
  Spectre, 305
  Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy, 321
  Superboy, 327
  Superman, 2, 338, 347, 349, 351
Sienkiewicz, Bill, 107, 128, 242, 243, 301, 413
Sif, 371
Signalman, 359
Silberkleit, Louis, 294, 373
Silent Bob, 76
Silent Knight, 61
Silent Majority, 356
Silent Seven, 294
Silk Satin, 317–18
Silk Spectre, 99, 345, 390–91, 390 (ill.)
Silken Floss, 319
Silva, RB, 329
Silver Age (1956-1969), **7–11**, 7 (ill.), 10 (ill.), 11 (ill.), 82
Silver Age Sentinals: The Ultimate Superhero RPG, 337
Silver Agent, 34
Silver Burper, 74
Silver Dragon, 279

Silver Sable, 177, 344
Silver Scarab, 210
Silver Scorpion, 340
Silver Star, 213, 214
Silver Streak, 2, 103, 245
Silver Surfer, 61, 74, 114, 134, 190, **298–300**, 299 (ill.), 301, 302, 334, 361
Silver Swan, 401
Silverstone, Alicia, 47
Silvestri, Marc, 189, 406
Sim, Dave, 75, 304
Simmons, Al, 189, 303
Simmons, J. K., 312, 313
Simon, Joe
    Avengers, 39
    Blue Bolt, 300
    Captain America, 81, 354
    The Double Life of Private Strong, 355
    Double-Dare Adventures, 11 (ill.)
    Fiery Mask, 196
    Fighting America, 355
    Fighting American, 6, 74, 139, 139 (ill.), 140
    Manhunter, 225
    Marvel Boy, 228
    Pocket Comics, 58
    Sandman, 289, 385
    Shield, 32
    Vision, 284
    Young Romance, 341
Simon, John, 281
Simone, Gail, 47, 56, 142, 402
Simonson, Louise, 248, 270–71, 414, 415
Simonson, Walter, 120, 132, 225, 226, 233 (ill.), 371, 373, 414
Simpson, Bart, 44–46, 76
Simpson, Crash, 153
Simpson, Don, 75
Simpson, Lisa, 45
Simpson, Maggie, 45
The Simpsons, 44–46, 76
Sinbad, 332
Sinclair, Rahne, 409, 412, 414
Sindella, 421
Sin-Eater, 310
Sinestro, 159, 161, 325, 359, 362
Singer, Bryan, 350
Sinister Six, 267
Sinister Stylist, 334
Sinnott, Joe, 134 (ill.)
Sir Justin, the Shining Knight, 61
Sir Percy of Scandia, 60
Siryn, 410, 415
Sivana, 359
Sivana, Georgia, 230
Sivana Junior, 90
Six Pack, 416
Skaar, 183
Skarsten, Rachel, 56
Skate Lad, 334
Skeates, Steve, 31, 167, 262, 374
Skeleton, 333
Skin, 411, 412
Skinn, Dez, 239, 241
Skinner, 279
Skrenes, Mary, 301
Skrull an Skymaster, 319
Skrulls, 195, 256, 419
Skull, 358
Skull Cave, 261
SkullFace, 291
Sky High, 79
Skylark, 319
Skyman, 354
Skywalker, Luke, 253
Slade, Carter, 153
Slade, Hamilton, 154–55
Slade, Jaime, 155
Slade, Lincoln, 154
Slag, 334
Slam Bang, 70
Slapstick, 254
Slater, Helen, 330
Slayer, 68, 353
Sliding Albion, 37
Slifer, Roger, 219
Slo-Bo, 222
Slotman, 44
Slug, 224
Small, Jon, 71
Smallville, 17, 156, 207, 211, 328, 328 (ill.), 329
Smallwood, Marrina, 23
Smash, 316
Smax, 27
Smith, Barry, 39
Smith, Guy, 416
Smith, Jeff, 25, 94
Smith, Kevin, 76, 108, 109, 156, 158, 161, 281
Smith, Paul, 319, 406
Smith, Thorne, 131
Smith, Tod, 191
Smith, Will, 18
Smogula, 333
Smythe, Spencer, and the Spider-Slayers, 308
Snap City, 223–24
Snarks, 271
Snipe, 279
Snodgrass, Melinda M., 25
Snow, Elijah, 264–65
Snowbird, 22, 23
Snyder, Ray, 401
Snyder, Zack, 17, 18, 351, 390
Soar, Dinah, 40
Sodom and Gomorrah, 264
Solar, 16
Solar, Man of the Atom, 383, 384
Soldier Zero, 204
Solo Avengers, 169
Solomon, Courtney, 152
Son of Satan, 12, 153, 353
Son of Vulcan, 361
Sonar, 159, 359
Son-O'-God, 75
Sons of Liberty, 356
Sons of the Serpent, 62
Sorkin, Arleen, 337
Soulsearchers and Company, 76
Soultaker, 363
Sovereign Seven, 331
Soviets, 246
Space Adventures, 86
Space Ghost, 10, 165, 166–67, 301, 332, 333, 361
Space Ghost and Dino Boy, 165, 331
The Space Ghost/Frankenstein Jr. Show, 332
space heroes, **300–302**
Space Ranger, 21, 300
Spaceboy, 112
Spaceknight, 81
Spacey, Kevin, 351
Spaghetti Man, 332
Sparkler, 356
Sparks, Jenny, 36, 265
Sparky, 355
Sparrow, 193
Spartan, 391
Spaulding, Roxanne, 151
Spawn, 16, 189, 190, 248, **302–5**, 303 (ill.), 334, 363
Special Operative Strikeforce, 291
"Specials," 280–81
The Specials, 78
Spector, Marc, 242
Spector, Marlene, 242
Spectral, 378
Spectral Avenger, 306
Spectre, 3, 8, 208, 248, 303, **305–7**, 306 (ill.), 352, 353
Speed, 278, 420
Speedball, 253, 254
Speedboy, 74, 139–40, 355
Speedy, 16, 155, 208, 260, 365, 387
Spellbinder, 360
Spencer, Kate, 226
Sphere Man, 332
Sphinx, 78, 256, 257
Spica, Angela, 36–37
SPIDER, 374
Spider, 28
Spider Queen, 340
Spider-Girl, 315–16
Spider-Man, **307–13**, 308 (ill.), 312 (ill.)
    action toy, 14
    anti-drug story, 12
    Avengers, 39
    Captain America, 86
    as a cartoon pig, 75
    cartoons, 332, 333, 334
    Daredevil II, 105
    death of Parker's girlfriend, 13
    Dr. Strange, 116
    enemies, 361, 362, 363
    Heroes for Hire, 177
    Hulk, 178
    as Marvel breakout, 9
    movie, 18, 363
    New Avengers, 41
    Power Pack, 271
    Punisher, 274
    role-playing video games, 337

  Spawn, 304
  on TV, 10
Spider-Man 2099, 248
Spider-Woman, 41, **313–16**, 315 (ill.), 332, 342
Spiegelman, Art, 75, 267
Spiegle, Dan, 15, 125
Spielberg, Steven, 333
Spike, 68, 69, 70
Spillane, Mickey, 185
Spinner, 332
Spinner, Dorothy, 386
Spirit, 3, 10, 266, **316–19**, 317 (ill.)
Spirit, 27
Spirit of 76, 4, 354, 358
Spirits of Vengeance, 154
Spitfire, 196
Splash Brannigan, 27
Spleen, 78, 110
Splinter, 368, 369
Split-Second Men, 204
Splode, Rex, 198
Spoiler, 283
SpongeBob SquarePants, 79, 267
SpongeBob Squarepants, 334
Spongeman, 97
Sportsman, 358
Sportsmaster, 158
Sprang, Dick, 50
Spranger, John, 317
Sprite, 408
Sprouse, Chris, 26
Spunky, 66
Spy Smasher, 3, 4, 71
Spyman, 10
Spyral, 315
Squad, 377
Squadron Sinister, 115, 319
Squadron Supreme, 168, **319–20**, 319 (ill.)
Square Hair Malloy, 140
Squatt and Babo, 236
Squid, 116
Squire, 245
St. Cloud, Silver, 52
St. Croix, Emplate, 410, 411
St. Croix, Monet, 410
St. Trinians cartoons, 409
Stack, Aaron, 285
Stack, Peter, 236
Stacy, George, 308, 312
Stacy, Gwen, 13, 308, 309, 312
Stagg, Sapphire, 234–35
Stagg, Simon, 234–35
Stait, Brent, 120
Stalin, Josef, 4, 358
Stallone, Sylvester, 302
Stan Lee's Soldier Zero, 204
Stan Lee's Starborn, 204
Stan Lee's The Traveler, 204
Standard Comics, 63
Standish, Christopher, 261
Stane, Obadiah, 203
Star Boy, 217
The Star Brand, 24
Star Sapphire, 143, 159, 358, 359
Star Wars, 112, 134, 253
Stardust, 138
Starfire, 255, 282, 365, 366, 367, 368
Starfox, 40
Stargaze, Stella, 138
Stargirl, 211, 321
Starhawk, 162, 301
Starjammers, 244
Stark, 163
Stark, Corrinna, 97
Stark, Tony, 163, 200–203
Starlin, Jim, 12 (ill.), 89, 89 (ill.), 247, 299, 301
Starling, James-Michael, 301
Star-Lord, 163, 301
Starman, 3, 8, 174, 208, **320–21**, 358
Starr, Karen, 331
Starr, Rick, 300
Starro, 205
Starro the Conqueror, 360
Starslayer, 286
Starsmore, Jonothon, 411
Star-Spangled Comics, 225, 282, 283
Star-Spangled Kid, 4, 208, 209, 210, 211, 320, 321, 354, 387
Star-Spangled Lass, 117
Starstreak, 271
Startling Comics, 355
Static, 126, 237–38, 248, 334
Static Shock, 238
Staton, Joe, 99, 139, 186, 249, 267
Stature, 420
Steadman, Ralph, 242, 413
Steamboat, 93
Steel, 206, 207, 248
Steel Claw, 28
Steel Harbor, 111
Steel Sterling, 32, 358
Steel the Indestructible Man, 356
Steele, Cliff, 122, 284
Steeljack, 34
Steeplejack, 243
Stein, Martha, 140–42
Steinem, Gloria, 342, 398–99
Steranko, Jim, 7 (ill.), 33, 83 (ill.), 118 (ill.), 119, 295
Stern, Roger, 40, 162, 176, 181, 199, 214, 285, 310, 407
Sterns, Samuel, 180
Stevens, Dave, 15, 126, 286–87, 286 (ill.)
Stevens, Jared, 120
Stevenson, Ray, 275
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 178, 215
Stewart, John, 160, 161, 248
Stewart, Patrick, 369
Stewart, Stanley, 320
Stick, 107, 109
Stigma, 291
Stiller, Ben, 78, 110
Stiltman, 105
Stilt-Man, 361
Stingaree, 235
Stingray, 323
Stinky Diver, 333
Stoker, Bram, 215
Stone, Chic, 364 (ill.)
Stone, Emma, 313
Stone, Jeremy, 391
Stone, John, 265
Stone, Kim, 60
Stone Man, 118
Stone Men of Saturn, 370
Storm, 13, 62, 247, 342, 344, 404, 407
Storm, Johnny, 9, 133, 136, 186, 323
Storm, Sue, 9, 133–36
Stormwatch, 36, 151, 191, 228, 391, 393
Stormy Tempest, 139
Story, Tim, 136
Straczynski, J. Michael, 194, 196, 281, 311, 320, 350, 372, 373, 402
Stradley, Randy, 110, 111, 232
Straight Arrow, 245
Strand, Thorne, 317
Strange, Adam. See Adam Strange
Strange, Doctor. See Doctor Strange
Strange, Hugo, 357
Strange, Stephen, 120
Strange Adventures, 112, 300
The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Stevenson), 178, 215
Strange Suspense Stories, 87
Strange Tales, 25, 120, 121 (ill.)
Strangers, 377–78
Strathairn, David, 19
Strauss, Eric, 120
Strauss, Linda, 120
Strauss, Tracy, 176
Strazewski, Len, 377
Streaky the Super-Cat, 329, 348
Street & Smith, 118, 293, 294
Strike!, 126
Strikeforce: Morituri, 24
Strimpell, Stephen, 77
S.T.R.I.P.E. (Special Tactics Robotic Integrated Power Enhancer), 321
Stripesy, 4, 208, 210, 321, 354, 387
Stripperella, 334
Strnad, Jan, 36, 45
Strobe, 78
Stroman, Larry, 414
Strong, Danny, 69
Strong, Lancelot, 355
Strong, Mark, 161
Strong, Tara, 272
Strong, Tesla, 27
Strong, Tom, 27
Strong Guy, 414
Strong Man, 331
Stryfe, 363, 416
Stryker, Willis, 268
Stuart, Alistaire, 409
Studi, Wes, 78
Stuff, 387
Stupor-Man, 74
Stuporman ZZZ, 76
Sub-Mariner, **321–24**, 322 (ill.)
  All Winners Comics, 195
  artistry, 5

    Avengers, 40
    Captain America, 82
    Defenders, 114
    Doctor Strange, 122
    enemies, 361, 362
    Fantastic Four, 134
    introduced, 3
    as one of big three Marvel heroes, 184, 185, 186
    Prince Nabob, 193
    rejuvenation, 9
    Tales to Astonish, 29, 178, 181
    on TV, 10
    World War II, 4
Suicide Squad, 47, 363–64
Sullivan, Chloe, 156
Sullivan, Samuel, 174
Sultan, Charles, 71
Summers, Alex, 404, 414
Summers, Buffy, 67–70, 69 (ill.)
Summers, Dawn, 68
Summers, Hope, 407
Summers, Nathan, 409, 415–16
Summers, Rachel, 408
Summers, Scott, 395, 403, 404, 405, 408
Summers, Tyler, 416
Sun Boy, 217
Sun Girl, 185, 341
Sunday, George, 79
Sunfire, 13, 247, 249, 405
Sunspot, 248, 412, 414, 416
Super, 25–26
Super Chicken, 148
Super Chief, 248
Super Friends, 14, 166, **324–27**, 325 (ill.), 332, 333
Super Fuzz, 77
Super Goof, 148
Super Goof, 74
Super Knakalovich, 355
Super Mouse, 147, 148 (ill.)
The Super Powers Team: Galactic Guardians, 326
Super Powers toys, 252
Super President, 332
Super Rabbit, 73
Super Ray, 79
Super Samurai, 332
Super Scuba, 331
The Super Six, 331
Super Skrull, 360
Super Squad, 209, 210
Super Stretch and Microwoman, 332
Super Turtle, 74, 147
Super-American, 355
Superbabes, 337
Superbarrio, 279
Superboy, 8, 80, 217, 219, **327–29**, 327 (ill.), 367
Superboy & the Ravers, 117
Superchick, 77
Superduperman, 24, 73
Superfolks, 24
Supergirl, 8, 15, **329–31**, 330 (ill.), 341, 342, 343, 349, 367
Super-Gorilla Grodd, 144
superhero, origins of, 2, 6
Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre (Coogan), 19
Superhero cartoon shows, **331–35**
Superhero Comics of the Golden Age: The Illustrated History (Benton), 2
Superhero Movie, 79
superhero role-playing and video games, **335–38**
Superheroes, 279
superheroines, 3, **338–45**, 340 (ill.), 344 (ill.), 345 (ill.)
Superhuman Registration Act, 357
Superkhakalovitch, 140
Superman, 3 (ill.), **345–51**, 347 (ill.), 348 (ill.), 350 (ill.), 351 (ill.)
    Archer, 358
    Burnley, Jack, 320
    Captain Action uniform, 80
    cartoons, 332, 333, 334, 350
    Darkseid, 252
    death of, 326, 328
    encourages reading, 5
    enemies, 358, 360, 363
    as first costumed superhero, 2
    Justice League of America, 8, 205, 207
    Justice Society of America, 209
    lampooned in *Radioactive Man*, 45
    Lobo, 220, 222
    Luthor, Lex, 357
    Madman, 224
    Metamorpho, 235
    movies, 18
    Nightwing, 256
    Olsen, Jimmy, 252
    Phantom Stranger, 264
    Saturday Night Live skit, 78
    Savage Dragon, 190
    Super Friends, 324, 325, 326
    Superboy, 219, 327
    Supergirl, 329–31, 341
    temporary death of, 16
    TV shows, 350
    Ultra-Humanite, 357
    villains, 360
    Wonder Man, 93
    World War II, 4
Super-Man, 25
Superman: The Movie, 14, 349
Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man, 14, 14 (ill.), 310
Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane, 348
Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen, 11, 251, 252, 259, 348
Supermouse, 73
Supernatural heroes, **351–54**
Super-Patriot, 85, 291, 357
Superpatriots, **354–57**
Supers, 336–37
Super-Skrull, 134
Supersnipe, 73
Supersonic Man, 77
superteams, 3
Superteen, 10
Supervillains, **357–64**, 362 (ill.), 364 (ill.)
Superworld, 335
Suprema, 339
Supreme, 26, 191
Surge, 125, 414
Surtur, 371
Survivor, 204
Suskind, Kim, 265
Sutherland, Donald, 67
Sutherland, Kristine, 67
Swamp Thing, 12, 22, 264, 333, 362, 385
Swan, Curt, 218, 348
Swan, Serinda, 422
Swann, Donald, 79
Swanson, Kristy, 67
Swayze, Marc, 92, 230
Swiercyznski, Duane, 56
Swift, 37
Swift, Jonathan, 216
Sword of the Atom, 36
Swordsman, 168
Syaf, Ardian, 47
Sykes, Norbert, 43–44
Sylar, 176
Syn, 112
Syn, Christopher, 216
Synch, 411, 412
Syndrome, 192
Synn, Silva, 138

T

Tadpole, 31
Takara, Marcio, 193
Takachiro, Hiro, 285
Tala, Queen of Darkness, 263
Talbot, Major, 183
Tales from the Crypt, 352
Tales of Suspense, 82, 342
Tales of the Teen Titans, 255
Tales to Astonish, 30, 60, 178, 180, 202
Talia, 52, 283
Talisman, 23, 248
Tan, Philip, 171
Tanarok, 263
Tank Girl, 344
Tapestry, 391
Tara (Buffy the Vampire Slayer character), 68, 69
Tara (*Herculoids* character), 166
Tarantula, 177, 210, 374
Tartakovsky, Genndy, 272
Tarzan, 332
Taserface, 163
Tattletale, 271
Tattooed Man, 159, 359
Taylor, Brian, 155
Taylor, Dwayne, 253
Taylor, George, 347
Taylor, Zack, 235, 236
Taymor, Julie, 313
T'Challa, 61–62, 267
Team 7, 393
Team Titans, 367

Teamo Supremo, 334
Teen Brigade, 82
Teen Titans, **365–68**, 366 (ill.)
    cartoons, 334
    "Dial 'H' for Hero," 116–17
    DNAgents, 125
    enemies, 363
    Flash, 144
    Green Arrow, 155
    The Hawk and the Dove, 167, 168
    Palmer, Ray, 36
    Robin, 50, 282
    Superboy, 329
    TV show, 17
    Wonder Woman, 398
    Young Justice, 419
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, 75, 149, 190, 236, 336, **368–69**, 369 (ill.)
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Arcade Game, 337
teenage superheroes, 151–52
Teenagents, 214
Tempest, 123, 367
The Tempest (Shakespeare), 215
Templesmith, Ben, 305
Templeton, Ty, 25
Tennyson, Ben, 335
Terishkova, Adrianna, 391
Terminator, 334
Termites from Venus, 326
Terra, 259
Terra II, 367
Terra Obscura, 27, 63, 338
Terra-Man, 362
Terrific Whatzit, 73, 147
Terrill, Happy, 146
Terrill, Ray, 147
Terror, 63
Terror 2000, 63
Terror Twins, 63
Terrorist, 63
Terry, Paul, 147
Teshkeel Comics, 249
Texas Pete, 333
Tezuka, Osamu, 284 (ill.), 285
Thanatos, 279
Thanos, 257, 299, 301
The Thanos Imperative, 257
Themyscira, 399, 401
Thena, 131
Thermoman, 79
Thibert, Art, 368
Thin Man, 130, 196
Thing, 9, 97, 133–36, 162, 177–78, 192, 249, 265, 361
Thinker, 143, 357
30 Days of Night, 305
Thomas, Clarence, 238
Thomas, Dai, 409
Thomas, Everett, 411
Thomas, Roy
    Alter Ego, 63
    Avengers, 39, 40, 195, 196
    Black Knight, 60
    Black Terror, 64
    Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew, 149
    Captain Marvel, 89
    Charlton, 99
    Defenders, 114
    Doubledare, 104
    Eternals, 132
    Freedom Fighter, 147
    Ghost Rider, 153
    Hulk, 180, 181
    Human Torch, 186
    Iron Fist, 198
    Justice Society of America, 209, 210
    Kirbyverse, 214
    Luke Cage, 268
    Marvel Boy, 229
    Ms. Marvel, 243
    Squadron Supreme, 319
    Sub-Mariner, 323
    Vision, 284
    Warlock, Adam, 301
    Wolverine, 394
    X-Men, 404, 405
Thompson, Bud, 90
Thompson, Craig, 25
Thompson, Flash, 308
Thompson, Jill, 401
Thor, 9, 10, 39, 40, 41, 178, 253, 292, **370–73**, 370 (ill.), 372 (ill.)
Thor: Vikings, 122
Thor (god), 38
Thor (movie), 18
Thor Corps, 372
Thorn, 143, 279, 358
Thorndike, Russell, 216
Thorndyke, Hamilton J., 43
Thorne, Frank, 13 (ill.)
Thornn, 416
Thorpe, Riley, 44
Thre3, 279
The Threepenny Opera, 216
Threshold, 151, 152
Thrilling Comics, 338
Thumbelina, 116
Thunder, 260
T.H.U.N.D.E.R. (The Higher United Nations Defense Enforcement Reserves), 373
T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, 10, 285, **373–75**, 373 (ill.)
Thunder, Jakeem, 352
Thunder, Johnny, 57, 208, 352
Thunder 88, 279
Thunderbird, 247, 405, 416
Thunderbolt, 87, 99 (ill.), 352
Thunderbolts, 169, 270, 363
Thundergirl, 333
Thunderstrike, 372
Thundra, 298
Thurman, Uma, 79, 344
The Tick, 75
Tiger Shark, 323
Tiger-Man, 13 (ill.)
Tiger-Man and the Destructor, 13
Tigra, 40, 169
Tim Holt, 153
Time Trapper, 217, 360
Timely Comics, 3, 184–85, 321, 322
Timm, Bruce, 27 (ill.), 161, 207, 231 (ill.), 253
Timmons, Anne, 190
Timmy, 334
Tin, 233, 234
Tina, 341
Tinker, 234
Tinkerer, 308
Tippy Teen, 374
Titan, 279
Titan, 111
Titanium Man, 200, 361
Titano the Super-Ape, 360
Titans West, 365
Toad, 361, 411
Todd, Jason, 52, 255, 283
Todd McFarlane Productions, 189, 305
Toei Company Ltd., 236
Tom, Nicholle, 330
Tom and Jerry, 165
Tom Strong, 26, 27, 338
Tom Thumb, 319, 357
Tomahawk, 355–56
The Tomb of Dracula, 12
Tomb Raider, 190, 344
Tomorrow Stories, 27, 140
Tomorrow Woman, 207, 285
Tonto, 157, 244–45
Too Much Coffee Man, 76
Top, 144, 359
Top Cow, 189, 190
Top Shelf Productions, 216
Top Ten, 27, 28
Topaz, 378
Topper, 131
Tor, 166
Torch, 3
Tornado Man, 331
Toro, 3, 195, 196, 355
Toro, the Flaming Kid, 185, 186
Toth, Alex, 165, 166, 209, 324, 423
Totleben, John, 240
A Touch of Silver, 190
Tough Kids Squad, 195
Tower Comics, 373, 374
Tower Prep, 18–19
Townsend, Stuart, 216 (ill.)
Townshend, Robert, 78
Toxic Avenger, 78, 333
Toxic Crusader, 333
The Toxic Crusaders, 78, 333
Toy Biz, 23
Toyman, 325, 358
Trachtenberg, Michelle, 68
Trainor, Larry, 122, 123
Trapani, Sal, 10 (ill.)
Trapp, Rattsy, 317
Trask, Bolivar, 404
Trask, Nicholas, 297
Trautmann, Stewart, 204
Travolta, John, 149
Tremor, Athena, 193
Trendle, George W., 157
Trevor, Diana, 399
Trevor, Steve, 397, 398, 399, 401
Triad, 152, 219
The Trials of Shazam!, 91
Tribal Force, 248

Trickster, 144, 145, 359
Trident, 334
Trigon, 366
Trimpe, Herb, 180, 394
Trinity, 344
Triplicate Girl, 217–18, 219
Triton, 194
Troia, 367, 401
Troop, 279
Troy, Donna, 365, 366, 367, 368, 398, 401
Truth: Red, White & Black, 85
TSAF, 279
Tucci, Billy, 177
Tundra, 224
Tundro, 166
Turbo Charge, 377
Turbo Timmy, 334
Turner, Dwayne, 37
Turner, Lana, 58
Turner, Linda, 58, 59
Turner, Michael, 348 (ill.)
Turner, Ted, 166
Turok, Son of Stone, 383, 384
Tuska, George, 39, 202, 268
Twabley, Phineas, 293
Tweedledee and Tweedledum, 358
Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (Verne), 215
Twist, Tony, 305
Two-Face, 51, 53, 357, 365
Two-Gun Kid, 40, 169
2001: A Space Odyssey, 285
Twoyoungmen, Michael, 23
Tyler, 416
Tyler, Liv, 184
Tyler, Rex, 285
Tyler, Tom, 93, 262
Typhoid Mary, 109, 363
Typhoon, 141
Tyrannus, 180
Tyroc, 218

U

U2, 313
U-Go Girl, 416, 417
Ulik, 361, 371
Ulthoon, 22
Ultimate Fantastic Four, 136
Ultimate Spider-Man (movie), 18, 248, 311
Ultimate X-Men, 407
The Ultimates, 40, 203
Ultra Boy, 217
Ultra the Multi-Alien, 22, 300–301
Ultra-Force, 333, 377, 378
Ultra-Humanite, 347, 357
Ultraverse heroes, **377–79,** 378 (ill.)
Ultron, 40, 186, 284, 361
U-Man, 196
The Umbrella Academy, 112
Una, 88–89
Unbreakable, 18
Uncanny X-Men, 249, 406, 407
Uncle Marvel, 94, 231
Uncle Sam, 4, 13, 145–47, 316, 354, 355
Uncle Samurai, 140
Uncle Scrooge McDuck, 44
undead, 12
Underdog, 77, 99, 147, 331
Undersea Agent, 374
Uni-Mind, 131
Union, 393
Union Jack, 196
United Kingdom, 279
Unity, 384
Universal Church of Truth, 301
Universe X, 89
Universo, 360
Unknown Soldier, 354
Urania, 235
Uranian, 254
Uranus, 229, 230
Urban, Karl, 302
Urich, Ben, 107
Ursa, 256
U.S. Commission on Superhuman Activities, 357
U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, 6
USA, 340
USA, Ultimate Special Agent, 25
US-Agent, 85, 357
Usher, Kinka, 78
Uslan, Michael, 295
Utopia, 407

V

V for Vendetta, **381–82,** 382 (ill.), 423
Vader, Darth, 134, 253
Vale, Vicki, 50, 53
Valentino, Jim, 75, 162–63, 189, 190, 295–96, 296 (ill.)
Valiant Comics, 16, 151
Valiant Entertainment, 384
Valiant heroes, **382–84,** 384 (ill.)
Valkyrie, 115, 358
Valkyries of Norse, 412
Vallarrubia, Jose, 270
Valley, Jean Paul, 53
Vampirella, 16, 190, 291, 344
Van Ark, Joan, 314
van Damage, Clawedd, 291
Van Dyne, Janet, 29, 30
Van Houten, Milhouse, 45
Van Sciver, Ethan, 142, 145, 161
Vance, Cindy, 45
Vance, Steve, 45
Vandal Savage, 209, 358, 359
Vanderbilt, James, 313
Vandervoort, Laura, 331
Vanisher, 118
Vantorians, 22
Vapor Man, 166, 332
Vashti, 323
Vaughan, Brian K., 112, 412, 420
Vaughn, Wendell, 229, 302
Vega, Don Diego, 422
Veitch, Rick, 25, 27, 240
Velluto, Sal, 271
Vendetta, 296
Venom, 310, 313, 315, 363
Ventimiglia, Milo, 175 (ill.), 176
Venture, Dean, 79
Venture, Hank, 79
Venture, Thaddeus "Rusty," 79
The Venture Bros., 79
Venus, 230, 254, 341
Venus Dee Milo, 417
Verheiden, Mark, 15
Verman Vunderbar, 252
Verne, Jules, 215
Vernon, John, 203
Verpoorten, John, 299 (ill.)
Vertigo, 16
Vertigo heroes, **384–86,** 385 (ill.)
Vibe, 206
Vibraman, 374
Vicious Circle, 290, 291
Victor, Myron, 193
Victorian, 409
Victorian League, 215
video games, 337–38
Videx, 122
Vietnam War, 167, 247, 356
The Vietnam War (Olson), 356
Vigilante, 208, 358, **386–88**
Vikings, 314
Villains and Vigilantes, 335–36, 337
Vincent, Harry, 293, 295
Vincent, Mavis, 295
Vindicator, 22
Violator, 363
Violent Messiahs, 305
Viper, 314
Vision, 40, 186, 196, 277–78, 284–85, 420
Vitrumites, 197
Vivisector, 417
Vixen, 206
V-Man, 355
Void, 292, 391
Volcano Man, 97
Volstagg, 371
Volt, 204
Von Doom, Victor, 134
Von Eedon, Trevor, 199
von Gunther, Baroness Paula, 397–98
Von Kampf, Erica, 241, 242
Voodoo, 391, 392
Voodoo Master, 294
Voodoo Vampire, 326
Vortex, 111
Vowell, Sarah, 191
Voyant, Claire, 65, 340
Vulcan, 195
Vulture, 308, 361
Vundabar, Virmin, 253
Vyk'n the Black, 252

W

Wachowski, Andy, 382
Wachowski, Larry, 382
Wagner, Jakita, 264–65
Wagner, John, 302
Wagner, Kurt, 408
Wagner, Matt, 15, 110, 190
Waid, Mark, 136, 145, 193, 203, 204, 227, 350, 391
Walkabout, 285
Walker, Christian, 25

Walker, Cory, 197
Walker, John, 357
Walker, Kit, 261
Walker, Patsy, 40
The Walking Dead, 197
Wall Flower, 414
Waller, Amanda, 363
Walt Disney Company, 18
Walt Disney Pictures, 191
Walter, Jessica, 121
Walters, Jennifer, 297, 298
Wandering Jew, 264
War Eagle, 33
War Machine, 202, 203, 248
The War of the Worlds (Wells), 215, 216
War Woman, 197
Warbird, 244
Warblade, 391
Ward, Bill, 71
Ward, Burt, 10, 50–51, 51 (ill.), 52, 79, 187, 282
Ward, Jay, 147, 148
Ware, Chris, 25
Warlock, 299, 301, 413, 414
Warlock, Adam, 163, 301
Warlord, 373
Warlord Kro, 131
Warlords, 374
Warner, Benjamin, 204
Warner, Chris, 15, 109, 232
Warner Bros., 17
Warner Publishing, 17
Warpath, 416, 417
Warren, Miles, 310
Warren (Buffy the Vampire Slayer character), 69
Warren Publishing Company, 16, 318
Warrior, 239–40
Warrior Woman, 196
Warriors Three, 371
Washington, D.C., 279
Wasp, 29, 178, 294, 341
Watcher, 67, 134
Watchman, 279
Watchmen, 16, 88, 99, 344–45, **389–91,** 389 (ill.), 390 (ill.)
Watchmen (movie), 18
Watson, Mary Jane, 308, 309, 311, 312, 315
Waverider, 168
Way, Gerard, 112
Wayans, Damon, 78
Wayne, Bruce
    Batgirl, 46
    enemies, 360
    Grayson, Dick, 254, 255, 256, 281–82, 283
    Huntress, 186, 187
    Kane, Kathy, 341
    origins of, 48
    Outsiders, 259
    Superboy, 328
    Zatanna, 422
    Zorro, 422
Wayne, Damian, 283
Wayne, Helena, 186–87, 209
Wayne, Joan, 137
Wayne, Martha, 48
Wayne, Thomas, 48
Weapon Alpha, 22
Weapon X program, 114, 395
Weather Wizard, 144, 359
Weatherman, 333
Weaver, Flaxen, 317
Weaver, Jenny, 127
Weaving, Hugo, 86, 382, 382 (ill.)
Web Woman, 332
Webb, Chris, 377
Webb, Marc, 18, 313
Web-Woman, 314
Wednesday Comics, 235
Weed, 374
Weeks, Lee, 109
Weeper, 71
Weevil, 78
Weill, Kurt, 216
Wein, Len, 51, 146, 263, 268–69, 309, 371, 394, 399, 404, 405
Weir, Christina, 414
Weird Tales, 1
Weisinger, Mort, 8, 30, 155, 208, 217, 300, 348, 350, 387
Weiss, Robert K., 79
Welker, Frank, 166, 253
Welles, Orson, 294
Welles, William, 280
Welling, Tom, 328, 328 (ill.)
Wellman, Manly Wade, 317
Wells, H. G., 215
Wells, Zeb, 414
Wendigo, 22, 23
Wendy, 324, 327
Wenzel, David, 162
Werewolf, 242
Werewolf by Night, 12
Wertham, Frederic, 6, 19, 50, 54, 282, 341, 359, 397
West, Adam, 10, 50–51, 51 (ill.), 52, 54, 77, 79, 187, 259
West, Iris, 144–45
West, Kevin, 163
West, Linda, 145
West, Wally, 144, 145, 368, 419
West Coast Avengers, 40, 186
Westfield, Paul, 329
Weston, Jack, 354
Weston, Stanley, 80
Wetworks, 16, 190, 393
Whale, James, 178
Whedon, Joss, 41, 67, 69, 70, 407, 420
Wheeler, Shannon, 25, 76
Wheeler-Nicholson, Malcolm, 1–2
The Whip, 423
Whiplash, 203
White, Ebony, 316, 318
White, Perry, 347
White Feather, 74, 193
White Queen, 410, 411, 413
White Tiger, 176, 199, 247, 269
White Violin, 112
Whitebird, John, 247
Whiteman, Aelfyre, 270
Whitemane, 271
Whitman, Dane, 60, 176, 199, 269
Whitmore, Courtney, 321
Whitney, Ogden, 74
Whiz Comics, 90, 92
Whizzer, 195, 196, 277, 319, 320
Who Wants to Be a Superhero?, 19, 280
Wiccan, 249, 278, 420
Widget, 408, 409
Wiedlin, Jane, 345
Wieringo, Mike, 136
Wild Cards, 25, 336
Wild Child/Wildheart, 23, 24
The Wild World of Batwoman, 77
Wildcat, 209, 210, 211, 260
WildC.A.T.S., 16, 191, 333, **391–92,** 392 (ill.), 393
Wildebeest, 366
Wildey, Doug, 286
Wildfire, 218
Wildguard, 191
WildStorm, 26, 151–52, 228
WildStorm heroes, **392–93**
WildStorm Productions, 191, 392–93
Wilkins, Mayor, 68
Williams, Freddie II, 88
Williams, Guy, 423
Williams, Joan, 143
Williams, Rob, 154
Williams, Scott, 19 (ill.), 271
Williams, Simon, 284
Williams, Van, 157, 246
Willingham, Bill, 15, 129–30, 129 (ill.)
Willis, Bruce, 18
Willum, 318
Wilshire, Mary, 253, 271
Wilson, Barbara, 47
Wilson, Luke, 79
Wilson, Patrick, 390 (ill.), 391
Wilson, Rainn, 25
Wilson, Sam, 84
Wilson, Slade, 368
Wilson, Wade, 114
Wincer, Simon, 262
Wind Dancer, 414
Windshear, 23
Windsor-Smith, Barry, 378
Wing, Colleen, 176, 199
winged gorillas, 170
Winged Victory, 34
Wingfoot, Wyatt, 246, 248
Winick, Judd, 96, 260, 368
Winky, 143
Winston, Clarice, 305
Wisdom, 409
Wisdom, Pete, 409, 416
Witchblade, 17, 190, 305, 344, 353
Wither, 414
Witness, 196
Witt, Alicia, 152
Wizard, 2, 33, 104, 116, 155, 209
Wolfman, Marv, 255, 256, 309, 330, 365
Wolfman Wilf, 220
Wolfsbane, 409, 412, 413, 414, 416, 417
Wolk, Douglas, 390
Wolverine, **394–96,** 394 (ill.), 396 (ill.)
    anti-hero, 15

  - Captain America, 86
  - Dr. Strange, 116
  - enemies, 362
  - Ghost Rider, 154
  - Heroes for Hire, 176, 177
  - Iron Fist, 199
  - multiculturalism, 247
  - New Avengers, 41
  - Power Pack, 271
  - Punisher, 275
  - Silver Surfer, 190
  - Spider-Woman, 315
  - X-Men, 405, 417
- Wolverton, Wiley, 168
- Woman in Red, 3, 63, 338
- Woman Wonder, 73
- Wombat, 44
- *Wonder Comics*, 2
- Wonder Dog, 324
- Wonder Girl, 14, 341, 365, 366, 367, 398, 419
- Wonder Man, 2, 39, 66, 93, 169, 184, 278, 284
- Wonder Tot, 398
- Wonder Twins, 324, 325, 326, 327
- Wonder Warthog, 74, 148
- Wonder Woman, **397–402**, 398 (ill.), 400 (ill.)
  - *All Star Comics*, 339
  - Angle Man, 359
  - Cheetah, 358
  - Dr. Psycho, 357
  - erased from existence, 343
  - Huntress, 187
  - I-Ching, 247
  - Infantino, Carmine, 11
  - introduced, 3
  - Justice League of America, 8, 205, 206, 207
  - Justice Society of America, 208, 209
  - Mary Marvel, 231
  - Peel, Emma, 342
  - *Super Friends*, 324, 325, 326
  - TV show, 342–43
  - World War II, 356
- Wong, 121
- Wong Chu, 246
- Wonktendonk, Jim, 44
- Woo, Jimmy, 230, 246, 249, 254
- Wood, Bob, 104
- Wood, Dave, 96, 116
- Wood, Wally, 10, 24, 80, 107, 318, 331, 373, 374
- Woodrue, Jason, 35
- Woolf, Virginia, 215
- Woolfolk, William, 4–5, 266, 317
- Woozy Winks, 266
- World War II, 3–4, 6, 81, 82, 104, 185, 208, 337, 356, 358
- *World's Finest Comics*, 49, 235, 346
- *The World's Greatest Super Friends*, 325
- Worthington, Warren, III, 404
- Wraith, 352
- Wrangler, Roach, 44
- Wriggles Enright, 267
- Wright, Bradford W., 8
- Wright, Laura, 137
- Wright, Thomas, 146
- Wundagore, 277
- Wyndham-Pryce, Wesley, 68
- Wynn, Jason, 303

X

- *X*, 16, 111
- X-23, 396, 417
- X-51, 285
- Xandar, 256, 257
- Xavier, Charles, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 413–14, 415 (ill.)
- Xavier Institute, 414
- Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, 403, 410
- X-Cutioner, 363
- *Xena Warrior Princess*, 344
- X-Factor, 414–15
- X-Force, 114
- Xi'an Coy Manh, 412
- X-Man Longshot, 406
- X-Men, **403–7**, 404 (ill.)
  - Alpha Flight, 22
  - Captain America, 86
  - Defenders, 115–16
  - enemies, 361, 362
  - Lee, Stan, 9
  - multiculturalism, 246, 247
  - Power Pack, 271
  - racial prejudice, 15
  - Storm, 342
  - Wolverine, 394
- *X-Men: Arcade Game*, 337
- X-Men: Excalibur, **407–9**
- *X-Men: First Class*, 415 (ill.)
- X-Men: Generation X, **409–12**, 410 (ill.)
- X-Men: New Mutants, **412–14**
- X-Men: X-Factor, **414–15**
- X-Men: X-Force/X-Statix, **415–17**, 415 (ill.)
- *X-Men* (movie), 18
- *X-Men Legends: Rise of Apocalypse*, 337
- *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, 337
- Xmon, 305
- X-O Manowar, 383, 384 (ill.)
- Xog the Evil Lord of Saturn, 359
- *Xombi*, 238
- *X-Presidents*, 79
- X-Statix, 416–17
- X-Terminators, 413, 414

Y

- Yafata's Moustache, 140
- Yak, 44
- Yandroth, 115
- Yank and Doodle, 355
- Yankee Boy, 355
- Yankee Eagle, 355
- Yankee Girl, 4, 138, 340, 355
- Yashida, Lady Mariko, 394
- Yatz, Professor, 100
- Yeates, Tom, 191
- Yellow Claw, 246
- *The Yellow Kid*, 1
- Yellow Ranger, 236
- Yellowjacket, 29, 30
- Yeti, 44, 62
- Yogi Bear, 165
- Yogi Bizerk, 100
- Yojimbo, Usagi, 149
- Yondu, 161–62, 301
- Yon-Rogg, Colonel, 88–89
- York, Dylan, 152
- York, Ethan, 152
- Yoshi, Hamato, 368
- Yost, Christopher, 417
- Young Allies, 82, 185, 195
- *Young All-Stars*, 210
- Young Avengers, 169, 249, 285, 419
- Young Defenders, 354
- Young Justice, 329, **419–20**
- *Young Men*, 185, 186
- Young Miracleman, 239
- *Young Samson and Goliath*, 166
- Youngblood, 16, 191
- Your Guide, 103
- Yrial, 378
- Yu, Leinil Francis, 350

Z

- Zan, 324, 327
- Zane, Billy, 262, 263
- Zap-Man, 224
- Zarzoza, 333
- Zatanna, 206, 211, 352–53, 386
- Zatanna and Zatara, **421–22**, 422 (ill.)
- Zatara, Giovanni/John, 421
- Zatara, Zachary, 421
- Zatara, Zatanna, 421–22
- Zatara the Magician, 352, 421
- Zauriel, 207
- Zealot, 391, 392
- Zeck, Mike, 199, 274 (ill.)
- Zelazny, Roger, 25
- Zenn-La, 298, 299
- Zero, 279
- *Zero Hour*, 36, 58, 168, 171, 210, 219
- *The Zeta Project*, 334
- Zeta-Jones, Catherine, 262
- Zetaman, 279
- Zeus, 131, 371
- Zimelman, Phil, 274 (ill.)
- Zimmer, 279
- Zip-Zap, 378
- Zircher, Patrick, 40
- Ziuko, Tom, 80 (ill.)
- Zok, 166
- Zombie, Rob, 313
- Zor, 305
- Zorak, 165, 361
- Zordon, 235, 237
- Zor-El, 329
- Zorro, 2, 191, 245, **422–23**
- Zot, 127, 291
- Zucker, David, 79
- Zuras, 131, 132

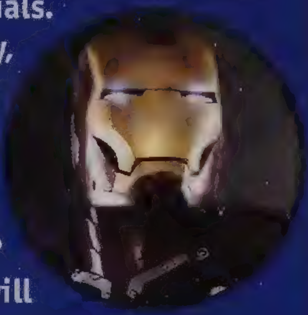
LOOK OUT!
YIKES!
tik tek
OUCH!
EEP!
CRASH
HAHA
ZAP
WHA-?!
?
!
PLIP PLIP
FWAP
MUNCH MUNCH

FOR MORE ...

SuperHeroMultiverse.com

CAPTAIN AMERICA
MARVEL
12¢ 108
CAP GOES WILD!
DC
WONDER WOMAN
MIKE MIGNOLA'S
HELLBOY
SEED OF DESTRUCTION

VANQUISHING ALL VILLAINS. RIGHTING ALL WRONGS.



Superheroes have repeatedly saved Earth from the well-laid plans of evil supervillains, larger-than-life aliens, and corrupt officials. Superheroes make life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that much sweeter—but who are they? Where did they come from? Where are they going? And what are they doing next? With *The Superhero Book* you will learn everything you need to know about superhero history, sidekicks, love interests, superpowers, modus operandi, and more.

SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH. VIRTUAL INVULNERABILITY.

All good superheroes are motivated to defend the
world from criminals and madmen, possess secret
identities, and look great in spandex, fancy capes
or high-tech armor. *The Superhero Book*
best-loved and most influential comic
television, and graphic novel superheroe
they are mainstream or counterculture,
forgotten. From the All-American hero t
hero loners, they are all here: the Avenge
and Robin, Captain America, Superman, Wonder
Woman, Captain Marvel, Spider-Man, The Incredibles,
the Green Lantern, Iron Man, Catwoman, Wolv
Hellboy, Elektra, Teen Titans, the Justice Leagu
Fantastic Four, and hundreds of others.

PRAISE FOR THE FIRST EDITION

"IT DEFINITELY FILLS A MUCH-NEEDED NICHE IN THE GROWING LORE OF THE GENRE AND WILL BE A WELCOME ADDITION TO THE COLLECTION OF ANY FAN OF SPECTACULAR SUPERHERO SAGAS. EXCELSIOR!"

-- STAN LEE,
INVENTOR OF THE MODERN SUPERHERO

"YOU'LL DISCOVER LOTS OF FUN DETAILS AND HISTORY ABOUT SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE SUPERHEROES IN THEIR COMIC-BOOK, FILM, AND TV INCARNATIONS."

-- AMANDA CONNER,
COMIC-BOOK ILLUSTRATOR AND
CO-CREATOR OF *GATECRASHER*

"HERE'S AN 'ULTIMATE' ENCYCLOPEDIA THAT LIVES UP TO ITS BILLING."

--*ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION*

"...EXCELLENT COMPENDIUM OF COMIC BOOK SUPERHEROES...."

--*CHOICE*

"THIS ENCYCLOPEDIA IS INSPIRING, AND AS A REFERENCE TOOL IT IS GOING TO GET A LOT OF USE."

--*SILVER BULLET COMICS*

"BEING A 'SUPER-HERO' BOOK RATHER THAN A 'COMIC BOOK' BOOK, IT INCLUDES PLENTY OF NON-COMICS ENTRIES.... HAPPILY, IT HAS BOTH A CONTENTS PAGE AND AN INDEX."

--*COMIC BUYER'S GUIDE*

"...A MUST-BUY FOR COMIC READERS INTERESTED IN KNOWING THE EARLY ROOTS AND CONCEPTIONS OF COMIC-BOOK HEROES."

--*SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL*

458-ABB-822

Mythology/Film/Popular Culture
ISBN: 978-1-57859-375-0
$24.95 U.S. / $27.95 Canadian

9781578593750 22
11/08/2019 9:15-3

9 781578 593750